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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TEACHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN: THE MORAL DIMENSION WITHIN OUR PERSONAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

by

Maureen Stratton Lemieux ©

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **TEACHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN: THE MORAL DIMENSION WITHIN OUR PERSONAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE** submitted by Maureen Stratton Lemieux in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my aunt, Mary J. Stratton, and my father-in-law, Leo G. Lemieux, in recognition of their contribution to the education of children in our province.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to illustrate the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as a group of nine women primary school practitioners. Over a period of eighteen months, the members of our group met every four to six weeks in collaborative conversation (Hollingsworth, 1992, 1994) wherein we engaged in a process of telling, retelling, and responding to teaching stories. Grounded in narrative and deeply ingrained in the affective, the ebb and flow of our collaborative conversations blended our individual voices and our temporal understandings into a shared narrative unity. Whereas an exploration of the moral within our personal practical knowledge provided the central focus for our research, a related focus involved an examination of my work as a researcher in a collaborative study based in relation, intimacy, and trust within the "ethic of care" (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984, 1986).

In undertaking a study of the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women practitioners, we viewed ourselves as possessing a personally relevant and experientially grounded knowledge. Further, we formulated our research as a way of making explicit our knowledge as practicing teachers, thus providing integral links between practitioner and theory development. This conceptualization of personal practical knowledge was initially developed through Elbaz's (1983) research

into practical knowledge, and further refined through the ongoing research into personal practical knowledge of Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly.

In our construction of meaning, we viewed ourselves as both "describers" and "improvers" (Lieberman, 1992) in that we sought to illustrate the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge, at the same time deepening our commitment to developing as professional educators. By adopting this viewpoint, we considered ourselves to be engaged in what Clark and Lampert (1986) refer to as self-directed professional development. In addition to the fact that it involved teachers in the construction of our own meaning, the study was also considered significant in terms of providing insights into how the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge was interwoven into the context of our daily lives as teachers of young children. We believed that our description and interpretation of the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge would prove meaningful to other teachers and to teacher educators as they examine the moral dimension within an integrated view (Elbaz, 1992) of teacher knowledge.

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Through their participation in collaborative conversation, the members of our research community supported my growth as a practitioner and a researcher, and for their assistance I am most grateful. Their commitment to the precepts of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference centered our work as women primary school practitioners within the ethic of care.

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CHAPTER I

A FRAMEWORK FOR STUDY

> Teaching offers something: it offers love. Not only the love of learning and of books and ideas, but also the love that a teacher feels for that rare student who walks into a teacher's life and begins to breathe. I teach because being around people who are beginning to breathe, I occasionally find myself catching my breath with them.
>
> Peter G. Beidler

These inspirational words detailing one teacher's excitement in witnessing student growth have been etched in calligraphy and hang framed in the hallway connecting the office area and staff room of one of my former schools. The quotation is a powerful one for educators in that it is centered within the moral dimension of our work and resonates with the qualities Elbaz (1992) describes as hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference. Several times daily I passed by this quotation on my way to collect supplies, answer phone calls, prepare materials, or visit with parents and other staff members, and never once did I find the time to read Beidler's words until my husband

Robert pointed them out to me one Friday evening in February of 1991, seven months after I began teaching at the school.

On that particular Friday, my day had not begun smoothly. In the morning, my vehicle would not start and I was forced to call a taxi to get to school. As it was, I was late for morning supervision. When I finally entered the classroom to greet my twenty-three ebullient year one aged children, I realized I had left the attendance binder in the staff room and that the children's journals and storybooks which I took home each evening to read and respond were not in their usual place in our circle area but still heaped in my satchel on the desk along with lesson plans and lunch bag.

Following a scramble to locate these resources, we completed morning attendance and moved into our usual literacy activities. With the day beginning in such a rushed and disorganized manner, I found it difficult to be as attentive and focused as I should have been on the children's individual learning needs. The central importance of providing a caring and responsive presence in the room tended to be diminished by my concern with completing all the elements of the lesson plan in an efficient and timely manner. Morning recess found me again on supervision, and a hastily organized meeting with a parent consumed my lunch hour. At 5:30 that afternoon I was still busily at work in my classroom putting away errant materials from our afternoon center time and preparing Monday's agenda, when my husband stopped by to drive me home.

I found Robert reading Beidler's words and when I walked up to him he commented on the power of the piece, in particular the idea of "that rare student who walks into a teacher's life and begins to breathe." It was only after having had these words read aloud that I finally stopped and, for the first time in the seven months of teaching at the school, read Beidler's words in their entirety.

I have heard school teachers compare summer holidays to the weekend, with July being the "Saturday" to relax and pursue outside interests, and August representing the "Sunday" to organize and refocus on the upcoming work in the fall. Consistent with this analogy, it was during the month of August in that same year of 1991, as I was at home busily preparing for my work in a new school, that I began to reflect upon the way in which Beidler's understanding of teaching was framed within a moral dimension of hopefulness for student growth, attentiveness to signs of that growth, and caring for differences or uniqueness.

I thought back to that Friday when the disorganization and hectic pace of the day overshadowed the moral dimension which should have centered my personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986) as a teacher. Everett-Turner (1984) speaks of disparate foci of "activity" and "presence" as the difference between "teaching as doing" and "teaching as being" (p. 225). Upon further reflection, I wondered how other teachers of young children sustained and deepened the moral dimension within their personal practical knowledge - their teaching as being - at the same time dealing with the "immediacy of classroom events" (Jackson, 1968, p. 119) amid the context of a public school setting.

In subsequent weeks, I contacted a number of teaching colleagues to inquire about their interest in coming together as a group to discuss what was envisioned as an open-ended conversation concerning what it meant to be a teacher of young children. Of the seven colleagues contacted, five agreed to come together on a regular basis to engage in a "collaborative conversation" (Hollingsworth, 1992, 1994) related to our work as primary school practitioners. From October of 1991 to May of 1993, the members of our group met every four to six weeks in my home for a pot-luck dinner and an extensive reflection focusing on the "narrative threads identified and highlighted" (Clandinin, personal communication, April 1, 1992) in our teaching stories.

Initially, our group consisted of six classroom teachers (five colleagues and myself) who held certification in Early Childhood Services (ECS) and worked in different schools and in different urban school districts. During the latter part of the 1992 school year, we began to discuss the possibility of expanding the membership in our group to include a few other colleagues who had heard of our work and were interested in joining. Cognizant of the need to renegotiate a sense of trust with the entry of new members, we nonetheless agreed in August of 1992, to enlarge our membership to encompass eight classroom teachers and one administrator, with all but one of our members certificated in ECS.

Teaching experience varied from four to over twelve years, with members of our group having worked in both integrated and segregated early childhood settings. Three of our members also worked as consultants in language arts and early childhood education. In terms of teaching assignments, seven worked with children in primary (kindergarten through year three) programs while the school administrator divided her time among primary classroom assignments, resource room assistance, counseling, and administrative responsibilities. During the 1992 and 1993 school terms, I also assumed administrative responsibilities in addition to my work as a teacher of primary-aged children.

As has been noted, our group was initially formed to research the question of what it was like to be a teacher of young children. We planned that through a series of after-school discussions, we would be able to define more clearly the role of the primary school practitioner amid the current realities inherent in public education. These realities included the impact upon early childhood teachers of directions undertaken at the policy level, including the focus on developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1986; Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1989; NAEYC, 1991), ethical conduct (Feeney & Kipnis, 1989), school readiness (NAEYC, 1990a; Department of Elementary Education, 1994), and media violence (NAEYC, 1990b).

Also of significance to early childhood teachers were current policies developed at the provincial level such as Education Program

Continuity (Alberta Education, 1988) and Vision for the Nineties (Alberta Education, 1991), with their accompanying media discussions (e.g., Byfield, 1989; Dinning, 1989; Russell, 1992; Loyie, 1992; Hatton, 1993; Nikiforuk, 1993). Again at the provincial level, recent studies dealing with teacher health (Jevne & Zingle, 1991) and associated professional concerns (A.T.A., 1993, 1994) were serving as focal points of interest to teachers of young children. Over the course of our study, there were also a number of articles appearing in the media which discussed general issues and concerns facing teachers of young children including the integration of children with special needs (Banks, 1991; Loyie, 1992), retention (McConnell, 1992), family stress (Ford, 1992), school violence (Panzeri, 1992; Canadian Press, 1992; Moysa, 1993), parental assessment of teacher competency (Habib, 1992), teacher stress (Moysa, 1992), and financial support for public education (Conway, 1993).

Purpose of the Study

Over the duration of the study, it became increasingly apparent that embedded within our collaborative conversations were stories illustrating the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women primary school practitioners. While my reading in the area provided relevant terminology, it was through engaging in the process of sustained and intimate collaborative conversation that our stories evolved into an exploration of the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge. Whereas an exploration of the moral within our personal practical knowledge provided the central focus for our research, a related focus involved an examination of my work as a researcher in a collaborative study based in relation, intimacy, and trust within the "ethic of care" (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984, 1986).

As teaching practitioners, we anticipated that through the storying and re-storying implicit within sustained and connected collaborative conversation, we would both describe our understanding and be transformed by the process itself. In this respect, we also considered collaborative conversation as it related to our "self-directed professional development" (Clark & Lampert, 1986, p. 30). However, even though we shared a commonality with regards to the age group taught, we varied in terms of our personal practical knowledge as embodied within individual life experiences, cultural frameworks, educational backgrounds, and teaching contexts. As a result, we did not purport to present a collective voice concerning teaching young children but rather addressed the topic "simultaneously through a set of prisms, each of which catches some part of it" (White & Epston, 1990, p. 8).

The Moral Dimension in Studies of Teacher Knowledge

According to Elbaz (1992), researchers studying teachers' knowledge tend to focus on cognitive and, to a lesser extent, affective dimensions. Moral aspects of teacher knowledge receive even less emphasis, although Elbaz concedes that this might be due to researchers adopting an integrated view of teacher knowledge within which the moral dimension represents an important component. The present study is illustrative of research which adopts an integrated view of teachers' personal practical knowledge within which the moral dimension is explored.

Elbaz (1992) suggests there are a number of reasons which might explain why researchers have not emphasized the moral dimension of teacher knowledge even though, as she astutely observes, "it is obvious if we look for it that moral concern pervades all of teachers' work and the knowledge that grows out of that work" (p. 421). One reason Elbaz (1992) cites for the diminished research emphasis on the moral dimension of teaching relates to the limited availability of "conceptual tools" (p. 421) within which to frame the language or categories. Elbaz suggests that the personal and concrete nature of teachers' moral thinking tends to situate this type of research outside the traditional research framework, and therefore represents a second reason for the limited interest in studying the moral dimension of teaching.

A third reason Elbaz notes for the limited research interest involves teachers' perceptions of professionalism, with discussions revolving around issues of "caring" and "relationship" deemed to be lacking the requisite professional rigor (e.g., Katz, 1980). Elbaz (1992) concludes by suggesting that a recent shift in research methodologies has provided the needed framework within which to study topics such as the moral dimension of teachers' knowledge, in that the resulting paradigm "rejects the distinction between the knower and the objects of knowledge and abandons the desire for control of nature" (p. 422).

As has been noted, the perspective advocated by Elbaz (1992) that views teachers as possessing a personally relevant and experientially grounded knowledge base - or as Duckworth explains in a recent interview that teachers "own the knowledge they hold about their own classrooms" (Meek, 1991, p. 34) - tends to run contrary to the prevailing contention of certain educational researchers who seem to suggest that only academics are in possession of knowledge (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). At issue is a lack of consensus in terms of defining knowledge.

When compared to the scientifically grounded professional knowledge of academics, the personal and practical knowledge of practitioners is sometimes considered less valuable in that it is not based on what Schon (1983) terms "the tradition of technical rationality" (p. 338). In his classic work on professions, Becker (1962) reflects this tendency to value scientific knowledge over practical knowledge when he states:

> The body of knowledge over which the profession holds a monopoly consists not of technical skills and the fruits of practical experience but, rather, of abstract principles arrived at by scientific research and logical analysis. (p. 35)

Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) present the argument cogently:

> Presumably scientific knowledge offers a more objective and reliable picture of classroom life because it transcends the details of specific classrooms, the biases of individual teachers, and the necessary limits of their experience. Caught up in the demands of their own work, teachers cannot solve problems in general; they must deal with specific situations. Thus their descriptions of teaching sound more like stories than theories because they are full of the particulars of their own experience. (p. 513)

Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) continue by suggesting that comparing practical knowledge to scientific knowledge on the basis of empirical criteria such as generalizability fails to recognize that one is different from the other, and not of less value. The difference, according to Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986), relates to purpose with the function of practical knowledge being "to inform wise action - not to advance general understanding" (p. 513). In alignment with the argument set forward by Feiman-Nemser and Floden, the present study adopts, as its central purpose, an exploration of the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as a way to inform our wise action as teachers of young children.

Narrative Inquiry Within Educational Research

In adopting a narrative perspective with respect to teachers' reflective thinking, this research study is situated within the field of narratology (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Although educational researchers have only recently become interested in the field, narratology has historically maintained a broad base of support throughout the human disciplines (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Commenting specifically on the role it plays in the area of educational research, Clandinin and Connelly (1986) argue that narratology links understanding with experience, at the same time liberating educational research from technical jargon, and establishing continuity between education and other areas of human study. Clandinin and Connelly (1986) define narrative as

> the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future. (p. 385)

As has been noted, the study of narrative has recently gained favor among educational researchers who are interested in exploring what Eisner (1988) terms "the primacy of experience" (p. 20). Fundamental to the narrative method is the view that educational research involves the building and rebuilding of individual and collective stories by teachers, students, and researchers who assume roles as both storytellers and characters. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain:

> The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world. (p. 2)

Polkinghorne (1988) concurs with Clandinin and Connelly in noting the importance of research approaches which are "especially sensitive to the unique characteristics of human existence" (p. x). While not advocating the abandonment of existing social science research methodologies, Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that "human existence consists of a stratified system of differently organized realms of reality - the material realm, the organic realm, and the mental realm" (p. 1), and that narrative inquiry should be offered as a complementary research method focusing on the forms of reality within the realm of meaning. According to Polkinghorne this realm of meaning is shaped by linguistic structures with the primary structure being that of narrative.

Polkinghorne (1988) continues his discussion of linguistic structures by suggesting that inquiries into the realm of meaning require "tools" for studying linguistic data just as research into material and organic realms need tools for the study of physical data. In Polkinghorne's view, "validity" is defined as a "well-grounded conclusion" with "scholarly consensus" existing as the test of verisimilitude, that is "results that have the appearance of truth or validity" (p. 176). Further, Polkinghorne suggests that a finding is "significant" if it is considered meaningful and important, and that its "reliability" is dependent upon the "trustworthiness" of the data (e.g., field notes and interview transcriptions). Again according to Polkinghorne, "data analysis" refers to the gathering of stories for the purpose of making explicit emerging themes or plots.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) affirm the importance of developing appropriate criteria for the study of narrative inquiry, rather than attempting "to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research" (p. 7). Connelly and Clandinin note that over time researchers in the area will likely reach consensus in terms of defining criteria appropriate to narrative inquiry and, until that time, individuals will need to identify and defend criteria deemed most appropriate for the purposes of their own study. In terms of the present study the criteria identified by Polkinghorne for the analysis of narrative data will serve as a foundation, with additional criteria being employed as required.

Narrative and Meaning Making

According to Polkinghorne (1988), a study is considered "significant" if it is deemed to be important or meaningful. This study was considered significant both for the value it provided to the practitioners involved and for the insights it offered to other teachers or to those involved in teacher education and research. In terms of value to the participants involved, the study provided a forum wherein teachers of young children participated as both practitioners and researchers in constructing the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge. Thus, we as practitioners were placed in the position of making meaning, or sense, of our teaching knowledge. Duckworth (1987) explains the construction of meaning in this way:

> Meaning is not given *to* us in our encounter, but it is given *by* us - constructed by us, each in our own way, according to how our understanding is currently organized. (p.112)

In our construction of meaning, we viewed ourselves as both "describers" and "improvers" (Lieberman, 1992, p. 8) in that we sought to illustrate the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge, at the same time deepening our commitment to developing as professional educators. By adopting this viewpoint, we considered ourselves to be engaged in what Clark and Lampert (1986) refer to as self-directed professional development. In addition to the fact that it involved teachers in the construction of our own meaning, the study was also considered significant in terms of providing insights into how the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge was interwoven into the context of our daily lives as teachers of young children. We believed that our description and interpretation of the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge would prove meaningful to other teachers and to teacher educators as they examine the moral dimension within an integrated view (Elbaz, 1992) of teacher knowledge.

Reflective Thinking in Studies of Narrative

The work of Schon (1983, 1987) is considered valuable in studies of reflective thinking in that he grounds his discussions of the problematic in professions from a starting point in practice. Schon (1983) argues that the predominant tradition of technical rationality wherein "professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique" (p. 21) is incomplete in that it fails to account for the "artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict" (p. 49). Schon suggests that in dealing with such situations, these practitioners engage in a "knowing-in-action" or what in common sense terms is referred to as "know how." When practitioners begin to advance theories based on their knowing-in-action, a conversion takes place which Schon describes as knowledge-in-action.

Schon (1983) continues by suggesting that practitioners engage in the process of knowing-in-action but that they also think about their knowing-in-action and, in his words, they "reflect-in-action." Again relying on common sense notions, Schon (1983) explains reflection-in-action in these words:

> If common sense recognizes knowing-in-action, it also recognizes that we sometimes think about what we are doing. Phrases like "thinking on your feet," "keeping your wits about you," and "learning by doing" suggest not only that we can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it. (p. 54)

While reflecting-in-action involves reflecting on the situation, as well as on our thinking and actions, while immersed in the practice, reflecting-on-action describes a similar process of reflection conducted after the practice has taken place.

In a series of papers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1987; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990), Clandinin and Connelly compare Schon's work in reflection-in-action with their own in the area of narrative. They note similarities including the focus on practice and the emphasis on understanding the non-standard nature of practitioners' work. However, Clandinin and Connelly depart from Schon in their emphasis on practice informing theory rather than theory informing practice. They also note that Schon adopts an observer role while Clandinin and Connelly operate within the shared perspective or "dialectic" of teacher and researcher. Further, Clandinin and Connelly suggest that the term "reflection-in-action" provides a perspective of the present but does not involve the past or future, nor is it concerned with the unfolding "story." Finally, Clandinin and

Connelly note that the term reflection-in-action is cognitive in focus, while narrative is embedded within the affective domain.

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) continue this discussion by suggesting that three perspectives may be adopted in discussions concerning reflective thinking in teachers. In considering reflective thinking from a cognitive perspective, the emphasis is on how teachers use knowledge in organizing and making decisions. The critical perspective focuses on what Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) refer to as that which informs the thinking, namely the "experiences, beliefs, sociopolitical values, and goals of teachers" (p. 39). The narrative perspective can include cognitive or critical elements, but places an emphasis on the contextually bound interpretations of practitioners themselves.

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) suggest that there are benefits to be derived from adopting a narrative perspective in studies of teachers' reflective thinking including the following:

> First, these studies give us insights into what motivates a teacher's actions and an appreciation for the complexity of teachers' everyday lives. Second, teachers' narratives provide us many detailed cases of teaching dilemmas and events. ... The third, and most valuable benefit is the insight gained by teachers themselves as a result of this self-inquiry. (pp. 42-43)

Cognizant of the benefits to be derived, the present study adopts a narrative perspective in examining teachers' reflective thinking by exploring how women practitioners articulate and interpret the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge in working with young children.

In an address to a teachers' association in British Columbia, Aoki (1987) notes the critical importance of reflective thinking and pedagogic thoughtfulness in honoring the "humanness" of teaching. To illustrate his basic tenet that caring, hopefulness, and watchfulness are at the core of "pedagogy" - used by Aoki (1987) in the classic Greek sense as "a leading of children" (p. 9) - he reflects upon four stories of parents and teachers. In so doing, Aoki offers an understanding of the term "thinking" in what could arguably be considered reflective thinking from within the moral dimension of teaching. Aoki (1987) suggests that

> What seems to be concealed and hence left unseen and unheard is the understanding of thinking that might be understood as "thoughtfulness" - thoughtfulness as an embodied doing and being, thought and soul embodied in oneness of the lived moment. (p. 20)

It is this focus on thinking as thoughtfulness which underscores the concept of reflective thinking in this study of narrative knowing.

Collaborative Conversation

Over the course of our dinner conversations, it became apparent that we were reflecting upon a complex set of issues and concerns in the teaching of young children. Our particular frame of reference was as women practitioners, and our conversations took place within a supportive, social, and intimate research community. Moreover, we became increasingly aware that we were considering the moral dimension of our work within the context of current teaching realities. In point of fact, through the forum of collaborative conversation we had established a learning community wherein we were seeking to make explicit the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as early childhood teachers.

The establishment of a learning community within which group members engage in a process of collaborative conversation is not without precedent. There are teachers who recognize the value of professional dialogue and personal reflection, and set aside time in after-school hours to join with others in discussing topics ranging from teacher pedagogy, to classroom practice, to curricular knowledge. One such local learning community was established to explore teachers' pedagogical assumptions through the process of conversational storytelling (McConaghy, 1991). Another community of teacher researchers is the Philadelphia Teachers' Learning Cooperative which has met weekly at members' homes for over a decade to reflect on classroom practices (Philadelphia Teachers' Learning Cooperative, 1984). In Spartan Village School, Michigan, Magdalene Lampert and other staff members have been meeting after school for over three years to "do math problems together and to talk about teaching" (Lampert, 1991, p. 671).

A longitudinal research study which involved beginning teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers in a collaborative conversation examining the process of learning to teach was established by Hollingsworth (1992, 1994). While originally planning to support the literacy component of her student teachers' work through a series of dinner meetings wherein she would assume the dual roles of facilitator and researcher, Hollingsworth gradually moved to a position of equality with the other group members as together they engaged in "sustained conversation" (Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 3) relating to the complexities of their work as school teachers, teacher researchers, and teacher educators. Whereas she had initially planned to facilitate their work through the development of her own discrete agenda, in moving to a position of equality with the other group members, Hollingsworth relinquished her own agenda for one "mutually informed" by all the members.

In fostering this social and professional relationship concurrently, Hollingsworth's group evolved a collective sense of how they understood the complexities of learning to teach, at the same time experiencing individual growth or "transformation" (Hollingsworth, 1992, p. 375) as a result of engaging in the process.

Hollingsworth (1994) describes the process of collaborative conversation in these words:

> Because of our ongoing relationship, the talk in our meetings did not usually take the form of *dialogue* similar to the conversation in a play or novel, which appears to have two or more voices, but which actually comes from one author's perspective. Nor was it simply a *discussion* of prearranged topics and readings through a formal discourse structure. Rather the collaborative and sustained *conversation* became the exchange and reformulation of ideas, intimate talk, and reconstructive questions. Given the mutually informed agenda that developed through this process, the extended conversation both identified and helped us understand our common stories about learning to teach. (p. 6)

In addition to describing the process as a form of sustained, connected, and social conversation, Hollingsworth (1992, 1994) argues that collaborative conversation represents an example of feminist research. She contends that as a methodology, collaborative conversation exemplifies a feminist approach to research in that it is predicated upon the needs of women, draws upon women's experiences in the creation of new theory, and demands of the researcher equal vulnerability to that of the researched. Through such an approach, both the researcher and the researched are engaged in reflection concerning their personal and professional experiences as women, and are transformed, or changed, by the research process itself. Hollingsworth (1994) notes that in adopting a feminist approach to research, the researcher accepts a level of discomfiture associated with personal transformation or change. Speaking on behalf of herself and the other members of the group, Hollingsworth (1994) comments:

> The familiar ways we've been doing research and teaching clearly haven't worked to change the conditions and opportunities for many students with whom we relate. We realized that we could not change "them" and "their situations" without allowing ourselves to change in relationship to them. And part of the discomfort came from not knowing in which directions we would change - and change again. (pp. 8-9)

As conceptualized by Hollingsworth (1992, 1994), collaborative conversation represents an example of feminist research which involves a process of sustained, connected, and social conversation reflecting upon personal and professional understandings, wherein the researcher and the researched experience transformation or change. It is within this conceptualization of collaborative conversation that the present study was situated. Through the process of sustained, connected, and social conversations which were grounded in our practices as teachers of young children, a "relational merging" (Hollingsworth, 1992, p. 381) of our collaborative stories evolved. This relational merging, or evolution, in our collective storying involved us in a "mutually informed agenda" (Hollingsworth, 1994, p. 6) exploring the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as early childhood practitioners.

Thesis Organization

Following this first chapter which serves as an overview to the thesis, the subsequent chapters have been organized in the following manner. The second chapter involves a review of relevant literature related to a conceptualization of personal practical knowledge of women practitioners within the ethic of care, while the third chapter provides a framework for the research approach of collaborative conversation. Chapters four, five, and six detail the findings of this study utilizing as a lens Elbaz's (1992) themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference.

The seventh and final chapter explores the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as an interrelated process of connecting our knowing with the work of Elbaz, at the same time constructing our own meanings. The chapter also examines two related aspects of our research into collaborative conversation: my work as a storyteller and story liver, as well as scribe; and collaborative conversation as self-directed professional development.

Prior to the reader moving further into the study, it seems appropriate to consider the words of Noddings (1986) who refers to teaching as a "constitutively ethical activity" (p. 509) wherein there exists

> a "moral type of friendship" in which teachers and students work together to construct and achieve common ends. (p. 509)

She continues by noting that those who participate in the classroom as researchers also enter into this moral friendship and function within this ethical construct. As with the researcher who physically enters the classroom to form a moral friendship with teacher and students, it would seem equally incumbent upon those who enter the world of teachers vicariously through this text to consider Noddings' (1986) cautionary remarks about ethical constructs in relation to the teaching stories read and reflected upon.

CHAPTER II

PERSONAL PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF WOMEN PRACTITIONERS WITHIN THE ETHIC OF CARE

In undertaking a study of the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women practitioners, we viewed ourselves as possessing a personally relevant and experientially grounded knowledge. Further, we formulated our research as a way of making explicit our knowledge, or "justified belief," (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 515) as practicing teachers, thus providing integral links between practitioner and theory development. This conceptualization of personal practical knowledge was initially developed through Elbaz's (1983) research into practical knowledge, and further refined through the ongoing research into personal practical knowledge of Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly.

Practical Knowledge

The work of Elbaz (1983) has been instrumental in making explicit the content, use, and organization of teachers' practical knowledge - at the same time illustrating how this experientially based knowledge is rooted in the world of practice. Utilizing a case study approach featuring the perspectives of a Canadian high school English teacher, Elbaz suggests that through the increasingly more global organizational constructs of rule, practical principle, and image teachers structure the content of their practical knowledge. These content areas include knowledge of self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development, and instruction.

Elbaz (1983) continues by suggesting that the organization, or "orientation," (p. 14) in which practical knowledge is held and used involves the following: orientation to situation, personal orientation, social orientation, experiential orientation, and theoretical orientation. Further, Elbaz (1983) utilizes the term "cognitive style" (p. 147) to consider issues relating to "practical knowledge in use" (p. 147). According to Elbaz, practitioners draw upon their practical knowledge as they respond to the complexities of teaching inherent within their own classroom contexts. However, Elbaz (1983) adds a cautionary note by stressing that she views these categories not as distinct kinds of teacher knowledge, but rather as different yet interrelated ways of discussing this knowledge.

By focusing upon one teacher's understanding and use of a practically based and experiential knowledge, Elbaz's (1983) study views the teacher not simply as a "conveyor" of information, but rather as "an agent, with an active and autonomous role shaped by her classroom experience" (p. 4). Elbaz suggests that in adopting this perspective, research in teaching will become more holistic in that it will involve studying "persons-in-relation" (p. 10). Moreover, Elbaz notes in operating from this perspective, research in teaching will seek not to separate theory from practice, but rather consider teachers' knowledge as "informed" (p. 16) by practice.

Personal Knowledge

While Elbaz's (1983) research examines the practical knowledge structures teachers hold and use, other research initiatives focus upon teachers' "personal knowledge," defined by Clandinin and Connelly (1987) as the "what, why and wherefore of individual pedagogical action" (p. 487). Although Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) caution that as a result of teachers' ranking within the school hierarchy, their personal knowledge does not tend to be valued as highly as more "objective" knowledge, recent research is becoming increasingly interested in identifying and describing personal knowledge as a way of more accurately conceptualizing the composition of teacher thought.

Clandinin and Connelly (1987) argue that while studies of the personal employ different terms such as "constructs," "conceptions," "perspectives," or "knowledge," the intent of the research tends to be similar in seeking to describe that which is personal in teacher thinking. Further, Clandinin and Connelly (1987) suggest that studies of the personal in teacher thinking tend to be grouped into three categories including those reviewing "practical actions, biographical history, and thoughts in isolation from action and biographical history" (p. 498). While noting that the majority of the research has focused on teachers' thoughts removed from discussions of action and biography, Clandinin and Connelly indicate that current research initiatives, including their own, are being directed towards examining these three aspects of teachers' thought in an interrelated manner. Not only do Clandinin and Connelly (1987) contend that the composition of teacher thought can be studied in an interrelated manner, they also suggest that teacher thought need not be restricted to the cognitive but can be enlarged to encompass the affective by ascribing to the view that knowing includes "aesthetic, moral, and emotional states of mind" (p. 499).

Personal Practical Knowledge

In ascribing to the view that the composition of teacher thought includes aesthetic, moral, emotional, as well as cognitive states of mind, and further, that teacher thought can be studied through methodologies which link practical actions, biographical history, and thoughts removed from the realm of action and biography, Clandinin and Connelly (1987) suggest that their narratively oriented research coexists with several other initiatives, each adopting different methodologies and each arriving at different outcomes. In a further discussion, Clandinin (1985) notes that research addressing what teachers know can be grouped into four categories. One type of study deals with teachers' knowledge of theory through the examination of general or specific understandings teachers hold in such subjects as philosophy, sociology, and psychology. A second type of knowledge considers what understandings teachers draw upon in practice, whereas a third type focuses upon the philosophical foundations of teachers' knowledge. The fourth type of knowledge, which Clandinin and Connelly term "personal practical knowledge," addresses that knowledge which is experientially laden and contextually bound, combining elements of both content and structure.

Clandinin (1985, 1986) argues that personal practical knowledge cannot be modeled solely on theoretical or practical knowledge, but instead represents a "blending" of knowledge sources. In this important respect, the embodied nature of personal practical knowledge differs from that of practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983) in its integrative quality "in our mind and body, and in our practice" (Clandinin, personal communication, July 22, 1994). Contextual and nonstatic in nature, personal practical knowledge as defined by Clandinin (1985) is

> knowledge which is imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being. Its meaning is derived from, and understood in terms of, a person's experiential history, both professional and personal. (p. 362)

Clandinin (1985) further notes that this personal practical knowledge is made explicit through the study of practice, and can be examined through direct observations and biographical reconstructions of teachers' "narratives of experience" (p. 363).

Clandinin (1985) continues by noting the significance of studying teachers' personal practical knowledge. She maintains that in the past certain curricular reform initiatives have met with limited success in that they failed to address the importance of teachers in the change process. The importance of considering teachers in the change process is also discussed by Fullan and Park (1981). Fullan and Park suggest that the implementation of a new policy requires adaptations or revisions to existing educational materials, teaching approaches, and teachers' beliefs. Further, they maintain that a ranking exists in terms of the difficulty with which each of these components is adapted or revised. According to Fullan and Park, it is least difficult to alter program materials, more difficult to alter teaching approaches, and most difficult to alter teachers' beliefs.

Clandinin (1985) also notes the importance of teachers' beliefs, or perspectives, in the change process by suggesting that "more adequate ideas of school reform" (p. 364) are ascertained when teachers' personal practical knowledge is taken into consideration. Advancing Clandinin's argument further, Richardson (1994) notes that a current conception of teacher change suggests that practitioners undertake the change process voluntarily and on an ongoing basis. According to Richardson the decision to adopt the change, however, is "highly personal" (p. 6) in nature, and involves a sense of whether the change "works." Richardson suggests that the current notion of "teacher as inquirer" (p. 6) encourages teachers to examine their practices more fully by exploring their underlying assumptions and beliefs. In this way, the notion of teacher as inquirer "provides a vision of a teacher who questions his or her assumptions and is consciously thoughtful about goals, practices, students, and contexts" (Richardson, 1994, p. 6).

A second reason Clandinin (1985) identifies for studying personal practical knowledge relates to the ongoing focus on enhancing the professionalism of teaching through the establishment of a specific body of knowledge. As with the field of early childhood specifically (e.g., Takanishi, 1981; Ade, 1982; Katz, 1985; Silin, 1987, 1988), or teaching in general (e.g., Ott, Zeichner, & Price, 1990), it is argued that the development of a specific body of knowledge will assist in securing and maintaining the professional status of teaching. Clandinin suggests that through the conceptualization of teachers' personal practical knowledge as both a "language" and a "perspective" for understanding classroom practice, a view is undertaken which acknowledges and values personal practical knowledge as representative of a body of knowledge specific to teachers.

The construct of image. In conceptualizing the term personal practical knowledge, Clandinin (1985, 1986) suggests that "image," as embodied within the realm of experience, represents one component of this type of knowledge. Operating from the perspective that teachers function as active and autonomous agents in their own classrooms, and that they operate from a knowledge which is practical, experiential, and influenced by personal goals and values, Clandinin's (1985, 1986) research furthers the work of Elbaz by examining the organizational construct of image to determine what role it plays in understanding teachers' personal practical knowledge.

As with Elbaz, Clandinin (1986) employs a case study approach but enlarges her focus to incorporate the perspectives and practices of two primary school teachers. Acknowledging the "centrality" of her role in the study, Clandinin (1986) argues that the knowledge gleaned from the research is a "shared meaning created by researcher and teacher participants" (p. 13), and concludes that images, which are value laden and expressed by teachers verbally or through their classroom practice, represent a "central construct" (p. 17) to understanding teachers' personal practical knowledge. Noting that the purpose of the study is to build a conceptualization of image as a component of personal practical knowledge, Clandinin (1985) suggests that

> Images are within experience and are not only in the logically defined words which specify their conceptual status. Accordingly, for my work, images are embodied and enacted. Their embodiment entails emotionality, morality, and aesthetics and it is these affective, personally felt and believed, meanings which engender enactments. (p. 363)

Clandinin (1986) notes the significance of emotional and moral dimensions in the creation of image, with verbal representations and classroom practices representing present expressions of past experiences. Clandinin (1986) suggests that the emotional and moral dimensions represent "the glue which binds together the personal private and educational life of an individual" (p. 136). In a separate discussion, Clandinin (1985) stresses the close relationship of the emotional and moral in personal practical knowledge in these words:

> Personal practical knowledge is an emotional and moral knowledge. It actively carries our being into interaction with classroom events. Personal practical knowledge is, furthermore, intimately connected with the personal and professional narratives of our lives. It is not something which has an independent and objective standing apart from our personal histories. (pp. 382-383)

The dialectical relationship of practice and theory. As has been noted, the research perspective advocated by Elbaz (1983) and Clandinin (1985, 1986) involve not only making explicit the knowledge of practitioners, but also suggest that teachers be involved "in the creation and validation of theory itself" (Silin, 1985, p. 43). To this end, the research initiatives of Elbaz and Clandinin have sought to make explicit the personal practical knowledge of teachers by viewing practice as "theory in action" (Clandinin, 1986, p. 20). According to Clandinin (1986), this dialectical relationship of theory and practice assumes that theory will "change and modify according to the shifting exigencies of the practical world" (p. 20). Therefore it is the practitioners themselves, alone or in collaboration with others, who create and validate theory through their classroom practices or who redefine their classroom practices on the basis of theory.

Not only does Clandinin (1985, 1986) link the dialectic view of theory and practice to a conceptualization of personal practical knowledge, but also to the relationship of researcher and researched in narrative inquiry. Clandinin argues that, as the researcher, she enters the classroom with her own personal practical knowledge and that this knowledge of teaching is reflected in her understanding of the two primary school teachers involved in her research on image. Clandinin contends that neither the researcher nor the teachers involved in the research remain unchanged as a result of this shared experience. As Clandinin (1985) observes:

> The meaning created in the process of working together in the classroom, of offering interpretations and of talking together, is a shared one. Neither teacher nor researcher emerges unchanged. In terms of narrative, it is appropriate to view this process as the negotiation of two people's narrative unities. (p. 365)

The concept of "narrative unity" is discussed further in the third chapter dealing with collaborative conversation as a research approach.

The present study. As conceptualized by Clandinin (1985, 1986), and Clandinin and Connelly (1986, 1987), personal practical knowledge is an experientially laden and contextually bound form of knowledge involving the cognitive, aesthetic, emotional, and moral states of mind. The present study adopts the conceptualization of personal practical knowledge as articulated by Clandinin and Connelly.

Integrated as it is within personal practical knowledge, the moral dimension is viewed as that which provides the cohesiveness between the personal and professional lives of teachers. Of particular relevance to the present study is the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge, as identified through collaborative storying of our narratives of experience. Further, this study recognizes the pivotal role of teachers in theory development and validation by adopting the view that practice represents theory in action, with our personal practical knowledge expressed through our classroom practices. As Lieberman (1992) aptly observes, "the practice-theory connection is no better served than when it is lived" (p. 11). In Lieberman's view, the development of a scholarly community is supported through the efforts of educators in universities and in schools learning not only about practice, but also from practice.

Women Practitioners and Ways of Knowing

The present study involved a group of women practitioners in collaborative conversation illustrating the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as teachers of young children. The intent of the study was to illustrate the moral dimension as articulated by a group of early childhood educators - be they women or men. Gender was not the determining factor for membership, but rather interest in coming together in collaboration as teacher researchers to illustrate the hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for differences (Elbaz, 1992) inherent in teaching young children.

Although one of my male colleagues was approached to join this community of teacher researchers, he declined, and thus the membership included six women teachers, expanding towards the latter part of the study to eight women classroom teachers and one woman administrator.

Women and early childhood education. It is perhaps not surprising that the participant group in a study involving early childhood practitioners would be heavily weighted in favor of women. Early childhood education evolved as a "one-gender history" (Seifert, 1988, p. 105) in that it was closely aligned to the work of mothers in the nurturing of good citizens during the seventeen and eighteen hundreds, in the propagation of spiritual and cultural values during the eighteen and early nineteen hundreds, and in child advocacy initiatives during the early nineteen hundreds to present day (Finkelstein, 1988). Apple (1983) notes that this legacy exists even today as teachers in general represent a "gendered labor" (p. 625) force, with the continuance of the patriarchal system of female teachers and male leaders. For example, a 1984 statistic cited by Seifert (1988) suggests that ninety-five percent of those who define themselves as child-care providers or early childhood educators are women.

Not only is the field of early childhood education composed primarily of women but, in addition, women practitioners enter the field through different routes. Bredekamp (1992) identifies three common routes in becoming teachers of young children including the traditional, parent, and serendipitous routes. Bredekamp notes that in the traditional route individuals plan for a career in education and pursue this goal directly through post secondary studies, whereas in the parent route individuals pursue their studies in education as a result of developing an interest in teaching through working with their own children. Bredekamp defines the serendipitous route as one in which individuals not previously educated in the field find themselves interested in, or actually working with, children in such settings as daycare or nursery school. In terms of the women in the present study, five entered the field through the traditional route, one through the parent route, and three through serendipitous routes. This diversity in terms of our routes into early childhood education contributed another layer of experience to our individual biographies, and thus to our personal practical knowledge as women practitioners.

Women's ways of knowing. Psychologists Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) describe a number of different perspectives in relation to women's ways of knowing including silence; received knowledge as attending to the voices of others; subjective knowledge as a focus on the inner voice and quest for self; procedural knowledge as the voice of reason with separate and connected knowing; and constructed knowledge as an integration of voices. Focusing specifically on this latter way of knowing, women who function from a perspective of constructed knowledge work to integrate their separate voices within an inner understanding which is reflective and morally consistent. Belenky et al. (1986) comment on constructivist women's knowing in these words:

> Most constructivist women actively reflect on how their judgments, attitudes, and behavior coalesce into some internal experience of moral consistency. More than any other group, they are seriously preoccupied with the moral or spiritual dimension of their lives. Further, they strive to translate their moral commitments into action, both out of a conviction that "one must act" and out of a feeling of responsibility to the larger community in which they live. (p. 150)

According to these psychologists, women who function from a constructivist perspective infuse care and feeling into their work to a higher degree than women who operate from any of the other perspectives. Belenky et al. (1986) contend that women who function from this perspective are oriented towards improving other people's quality of life through their involvement in human services, social action, and advocacy groups. In addition to being concerned with improving the quality of life of others, these women appreciate an environment in which their own values and convictions are nurtured.

Women's knowing and the work of teaching. Belenky et al. (1986) conclude by suggesting that "connected teaching" (p. 214) is nurtured by those women who operate from the perspective of a connected and integrated voice. In agreement with critical theorists such as Paulo Freire, Belenky et al. contend that the traditional educational system compares favorably to "banking," (p. 214) with teachers responsible for making deposits and students responsible for storing these deposits or "true knowledge" (p. 214).

By contrast, Belenky et al. suggest that connected teaching places the teacher in the role of "midwife" (p. 217), in that connected teachers assist learners in making explicit and enriching upon their tacit knowledge in the same way that midwives assist women in labour to make explicit their own understanding of the birthing process. Belenky et al. suggest that in connected teaching, the emphasis is on establishing and nurturing a teacher presence in such a manner as to facilitate learning, at the same time maintaining an authority based upon cooperation and not subordination. In illustrating the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge, participants in the present study perceived ourselves as engaged in connected teaching through our presence in the classroom as caring and reflective educators.

Grumet (1988) also addresses the issue of women and the work of teaching. In a strong indictment of the present culture of schooling, Grumet argues that schooling has as its mandate the transfer of children from the maternal nurturance of the home to the patriarchal detachment of a public institution. Grumet contends that historically the predominantly male educational leaders sought out women as classroom teachers in an attempt to "reclaim their mothers," (p. 55) while women were attracted to teaching in an effort to distance themselves from their mothers and maternal nurturance, in order to identify with their fathers who held power and status in society. According to Grumet (1988), this "feminization of teaching" (p. 56) resulted in the irony of women suppressing their understanding of maternal nurturance in favour of a "harsh and regimented authority" (pp. 44-45). Grumet (1988) explains the phenomenon in these words:

> Accordingly, female teachers complied with the rationalization and bureaucratization that pervaded the common schools as the industrial culture saturated the urban areas. Rather than emulate the continuous and extended relation of a mother and her maturing child, they acquiesced to the graded schools - to working with one age group for one year at a time. Rather than demand the extended relation that would bind them over time to individual children, they agreed to large group instruction where the power of the peer collective was at least as powerful as the mother/child bond. Deprived of the classical education that most of the males who organized the schools enjoyed, normalities accepted the curriculum as bestowed, and deviations from it remained in the privacy of the classroom and were not presented to principals or committees of visitors. (p. 55)

Grumet (1988) continues by advocating a fundamental change in the way women understand their teaching. She contends that in moving away from the stigma of teaching as women's work to "reclaim and transform it into the work of women" (p. 58), women teachers, in conjunction with parents, must honour their early maternal experiences in the home and recreate this sense of relation within a caring and safe school environment. Grumet (1988) suggests that by not adopting this relational knowing, schools will remain impersonal and increasingly mechanized so that they "cannot sustain human relationships of sufficient intimacy to support the risks, the trust, and the expression that learning requires" (p. 56).

In terms of the present study, the research of Belenky et al. (1986) and Grumet (1988) is instructive in that these authors discuss the work of teaching from the perspective of women practitioners. In their discussion of constructed knowledge, Belenky et al. note that this reflective and morally consistent way of knowing leads women into fields such as teaching, within which they can work in a caring and facilitative manner. Grumet's (1988) research considers the work of teaching from the perspective of women practitioners by arguing that teaching be considered the "work of women" wherein women practitioners can recreate from early maternal experiences, a sense of relation and care within the classroom environment. In the present study, we drew upon the work of Belenky et al. (1986) and Grumet (1988) as a frame of reference within which we explored our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. This frame of reference also extended to our choice of meeting environment, which we sought to develop as an intimate and supportive collaborative community.

Women's Moral Knowing Within the Ethic of Care

In comparing the work of Belenky et al. (1986) and Grumet (1988), it is suggested that both works value a kind of women's knowing which is based upon precepts of relation and nurture. With respect to this knowing, which Belenky et al. refer to as constructivist and Grumet associates with maternal nurturance, the focus for teachers is in fostering a presence among learners which is supportive, caring, and safe. In Gilligan's (1982) view, this focus, or emphasis, upon caring for others can be viewed as attainment of an advanced level of moral development.

A student and colleague of Lawrence Kohlberg, Gilligan's (1982) influential work grew out of her interest in exploring the discrepancy between her moral knowing and that of accepted theory as described in Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) stages of human moral development. Initially reported in his 1958 dissertation and based exclusively on a sample of men, Kohlberg identified six stages of moral development with the higher levels on the continuum reflecting increasingly more mature moral judgments. While acknowledging that not all individuals reach the sixth level of moral development, Kohlberg suggests that the highest level of moral attainment is reached when individuals base their judgments upon universal ethical principles of conscience whereas the second highest level of moral attainment is reached when decisions are based upon maintenance of the social contract through the adoption of individual rights and democratically based law.

In attempting to explain why there seems to be a discrepancy between her own moral knowing and that of other women when compared with Kohlberg's male-biased moral scale, Gilligan's (1982) pioneering work with women describes two moral systems which she suggests are equal in value and coexist in human moral development. While underscoring the point that these systems are not mutually exclusive to one or the other gender, and therefore not intended to represent generalizations about either, Gilligan notes that the highest moral system in Kohlberg's hierarchy is predicated upon the judgments of men and operates from within an individual framework of justice and equality, whereas the moral system which she suggests is framed within "the different voice" (p. 2) of predominantly female judgments, is situated within an ethic of caring and relationship.

In Gilligan's (1982) view, decision making within the former moral system relies upon individual rights and principles, whereas the latter moral system considers dilemmas from within the context of social relationships, with judgments based upon specific circumstances. In contrast to Kohlberg (1981, 1984) who holds that the highest level of moral development is attained when individuals function from the basis of universal and ethical principles of conscience, Gilligan (1982) concludes that the two moral systems exist side by side in human moral development, with moral judgments influenced by the social context within which they are situated.

In addition to noting that neither moral system is represented by an entirely female or male membership, and further, that the differences between the two systems can be attributed to factors of culture and experience rather than nature, Gilligan (1982) also contends that it is neither reasonable nor desirable for either moral system to be perceived as mutually exclusive. Gilligan argues that through acknowledging the interconnected nature of these two moral systems, a more comprehensive understanding of human development may evolve. Gilligan (1982) comments about the interconnectedness of the two moral systems in these words:

> To understand how the tension between responsibilities and rights sustains the dialectic of human development is to see the integrity of two disparate modes of experience that are in the end connected. While an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality - that everyone should be treated the same - an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence - that no one should be hurt. (p. 174)

In a review of Gilligan's (1982) work in the area of moral development, Code (1988) offers a cautionary note. Code contends that in interpreting Gilligan's work, one may be led to the conclusion that neither moral system is identified as exclusively male or female, and further, that neither moral system is deemed of higher value. Code argues that the traditional view held by moral philosophers is that rationality affords the foundational piece upon which discussions of rights and principles are overlaid, and further, that this rationality tends to exist as a predominantly male characteristic. Thus, the "different" and typically female voice Gilligan (1982) identifies within the caring and relationship based moral system has traditionally been considered wholly affective, lacking a basis in rationality and subsequently deemed inferior.

In addition, Code (1988) contends that North American culture has historically valued conformity, with difference often being equated with inferiority. Thus, Code notes that a current focus in feminist literature centers on defining the concept of "difference," with some feminist writers contending that differences between the genders be underscored in favour of gender-neutral laws while others suggesting that perceived differences be acknowledged and celebrated. Code concludes by citing Gilligan's work as an example of the latter focus in that Gilligan seeks to describe and honor a difference she found between women's ways of understanding their moral development and accepted theory in the field of psychology.

In agreement with Code that concerns arise in interpreting Gilligan's work as gender-specific, Faludi (1991) notes that research in the area of gender differences has the potential for exploring "power relations" (p. 326) but may also provide the underlying justification for perpetuating them. While commending Gilligan for providing female representation to formerly male-dominated studies of moral development, and further for her initial stance that differences noted should not be generalized solely to one gender nor considered in isolation from the larger social context of social status and power, Faludi criticizes Gilligan's (1982) work for failing to explore factors of social status and power throughout her study, thus leading many to the misguided conclusion that the differences found in moral reasoning are exclusively gender-based. In Faludi's view, this misrepresentation of Gilligan's work provides an ongoing justification for discrimination on the basis that women's knowing is different, and possibly inferior, to that of men. As Faludi (1991) argues:

> Marking women as "special" slips easily into demarcating limits on them. "Special" may sound like superior, but it is also a euphemism for handicapped. (p. 326)

As has been noted, Gilligan's (1982) study identifies two parallel and interconnected moral systems, one involving an ethic of justice and the other an ethic of care. In a similar line of thought, Noddings (1984) also compares these two moral systems, establishing within her work a philosophical argument for the universal adoption of the ethic of care. In discussing the concept of moral knowing, Noddings (1984) contends that a differentiation needs to be made between the dominant view of ethics as an hierarchical examination of logical reasoning in terms of fairness and justice, and the alternative conception as practical or moral reasoning based upon affective conceptions of human caring. Arguing that Kohlberg's work represents a "hierarchical description of moral reasoning" (p. 96) and not a model for moral development, Noddings (1984) maintains that the majority of women consider moral problems from within a preferred framework of concrete lived experiences rather than from a perspective of abstract reasoning.

Defining ethics as the "philosophical study of morality" (p. 1), Noddings (1984) suggests the alternative, practical, and "feminine" approach to ethics is framed within the precepts of receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness. In Noddings' view, the requirement for universality in the holding of an ethical judgment is rejected in that ethical encounters represent unique and subjective experiences, and are thus rarely comparable. However, Noddings (1984) cautions against assuming a relativist position with respect to the ethic of caring and instead counters that there exists a fundamental universality in the care ethic in that "the caring attitude, that attitude which expresses our earliest memories of being cared for, is universally accessible" (p. 5). Also rejected by Noddings is the requirement for rules and principles in establishing ethical behaviour. Instead, Noddings (1984) favours an "ethical caring" approach which addresses the need to "meet the other morally" (p. 4). Noddings (1984) discusses ethical caring in these words:

> The relation of natural caring will be identified as the human condition that we, consciously or unconsciously, perceive as "good." It is that condition toward which we long and strive, and it is our longing for caring - to be in that special relation - that provides the motivation for us to be moral. We want to be moral in order to remain in the caring relation and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring. (p. 5)

In differentiating between the ethic of justice and the ethic of care, Noddings (1984) adopts the position that the former moral system is characterized by rationality and cognition associated with the masculine experience, whereas the latter by relation and affect more closely aligned with the feminine experience. While choosing to characterize the two moral systems as masculine and feminine, Noddings includes a similar note of caution as does Gilligan (1982). As with Gilligan, Noddings contends that while the ethic of justice has arisen from the culture and experiences of men and the ethic of care from women, this should not suggest exclusivity on the basis of gender. In emphasizing pre-act consciousness as opposed to after-the-fact consequences and judgments, Noddings contends that the ethic of care represents an alternative, albeit feminine, approach to morality requiring of consideration. Further, Noddings supports Gilligan in her contention that the ethic of care represents an alternative, less traditional, and equally valid approach to morality. Noddings (1984) comments:

> Today we are asked to believe that women's "lack of experience in the world" keeps them at an inferior stage in moral development. I am suggesting, to the contrary, that a powerful and coherent ethic and, indeed, a different sort of world may be built on the natural caring so familiar to women. (p. 46)

In characterizing morality as an "active virtue," Noddings (1984) suggests that within the ethic of care there exists an obligation, and not merely a justification, for the nurturance of caring. Noddings contends that it is incumbent upon both those who care for (the "one-caring") and those who are in receipt of the caring (the "cared-for") to actively maintain and enrich the fidelity of the caring process. Noddings notes that the precepts of relationship, relatedness, and responsiveness are nurtured through dialogue and practice, and further argues that celebrations of the ordinary in everyday life often provide opportunities for promoting this nurturance of the ethic of care.

The ethic of care and teaching. According to Noddings (1984), nurturing the ethic of care represents the primary aim of home and school, as well as other human institutions such as police and social services, religious ministries, and community networks. In Noddings' view, individuals responsible for the care must safeguard and enhance caring in themselves and in those to whom they are responsible. Further, Noddings contends that human institutions must guard against an approach to the education of children whereby training is divided into spheres of responsibility, with school being responsible for the training of intelligence, and home and church for moral and emotional well-being. As Noddings (1984) observes:

> Questions concerning the ethical arise in every aspect of human life, and nurturance of the ethical ideal cannot be assigned to any one or two institutions. All must accept responsibility. (p. 173)

However, while arguing that the primary goal of education is in preserving and enhancing the ethic of care, Noddings also notes that the secondary priority of school involves intellectual and aesthetic goals.

While the primary goal of education is in preserving and enhancing the ethic of care, Noddings (1984) further contends that a teacher is first one who cares for others and second one who is involved in specialized functions. Noting that one does not assume the role of teacher any more than one assumes the role of mother, Noddings maintains that in teaching there is fostered a specialized and caring relationship wherein the teacher and student work together in a form of apprenticeship which is directed towards enlarging the student's understanding and competency of the world. Again according to Noddings, an even higher priority for the teacher than enlarging a world view is the nurturing of the student's ethical ideal through dialogue, modeling or practice, and confirmation. Whereas the teacher is the "one-caring" in the relationship, the student is the "cared-for," and it is her or his responsiveness that completes the caring continuum.

In response to criticism that relatedness and caring do not represent realistic goals within contemporary school organizations involving large class sizes and limited periods of teacher-student interaction (e.g., Strike, 1990), Noddings (1984) counters that she is not advocating an intensely personal, time consuming relationship with each student but rather "to be totally and nonselectively present" (p. 180) with a student, regardless of the brevity of the encounter. Noddings also notes that in adopting the view that the primary function of any educational community is to foster and evaluate the ethic of care, a redesigning of schools may be required wherein dialogue, practice, and confirmation are nurtured through such initiatives as the following: reducing the size of schools; reorganizing school environments from three (elementary, junior high, senior high) to two (K-7 and 8-12); increasing the number of years a teacher relates with a group of students; broadening the curriculum to include cultural, personal, and psychological dimensions of the human experience; and providing students with community-based "caring apprenticeships" with humans, animals, and the environment. Of primary focus with all these recommendations would be the requirement of meeting the other in caring.

Fidelity within the ethic of care. This requirement to meet the other in caring, in effect to be centered within the ethic of care, is viewed by Noddings (1986) as critical to the work of teachers, teacher educators, and educational researchers. While a discussion of the ethic of care in educational research will be dealt with in the following chapter, Noddings' (1986) views concerning teaching as a "constitutively ethical activity" (p. 509) involving fidelity within relationship bear consideration at this point. According to Noddings (1986), fidelity within the ethic of care is not defined in terms of an obligation as in a "faithfulness to duty or principle" (p. 497), but rather as "a direct response to individuals with whom one is in relation" (p. 497). Noddings considers fidelity as a quality within a relationship, and not simply an attribute or characteristic ascribed to the moral behaviour of the one providing the duty. Thus, Noddings views fidelity within a relation as involving both reciprocity and confirmation between the one-caring and the one cared-for, and constancy in terms of the quality of the relation.

Noddings (1986) continues by noting that within the ethic of caring, the teaching-learning relationship is a "moral type of friendship" (p. 499) wherein both the affective and academic growth are promoted through the fidelity of relation. Noting that the language of relation is often reserved to discussions of the private domain, Noddings argues that this language is necessary in the public domain of teaching to provide a framework within which the precepts of caring and relation form the basis for teacher reflection and inquiry. Noddings (1986) suggests that in drawing from this basis, the primacy of fidelity to persons would guide thinking in such a way that teachers would reflect upon their work in terms of its impact on the present relation, the growth of that person as a caring individual, and the development of a community of caring.

Ethic of care and the present study. In conceptualizing caring as a moral orientation to teaching, Noddings (1984, 1986) provides a practical and arguably feminine framework within which the precepts of receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness are considered. It is within this framework, or ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984, 1986), that the present study is situated - both from the perspective of the research questions posed, and from the research approach employed in exploring the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners.

However, the cautionary remarks raised by Code (1988) and Faludi (1991) are noteworthy in relation to the present study. As has been indicated, membership in the present study was exclusively female, not by design but by circumstances - not the least of which is the fact that the majority of early childhood educators tend to be women. In describing our personal practical knowledge in terms of an emotional and moral dimension which is integrated in our mind and body, and in our practice, it was the intention of our members to explore our relational and connected knowing as women early childhood practitioners. However, it was not our intention to suggest that the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge might be represented as qualitatively different from that adopted by our male counterparts or, indeed, that a comparison of this nature could even be deemed appropriate in terms of the study's framework. From the outset we advanced the view that, regardless of gender, the focus on providing connected teaching experiences to the children in our care represented the essence of everyone's work as early childhood teachers. Thus, in our commitment to the precepts of receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness, we considered ourselves as aligned with Noddings' (1984) view regarding the universality of the ethic of care.

CHAPTER III

COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATION AS A RESEARCH APPROACH

In the previous chapter, discussion focused on a conceptualization of personal practical knowledge of women practitioners within the ethic of care. Framed within the ethic of care, the present research might not be considered representative of contemporary research initiatives into teacher knowledge which tend to consider practitioner knowledge within the cognitive domain (Clark & Jensen, 1991). By contrast, in its emphasis on the precepts of receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness, the focus within the present study is on the non-cognitive qualities of care and community embedded within teacher knowledge.

Terming this a "dialectic tension between the priority of individual cognition and efficient information transfer, on the one hand, and of relationship and care, on the other hand" (Clark & Jensen, 1991, p. 5), Clark and Jensen pose the question as to how research within the profession of teaching might be reframed if "ways of care" garnered pre-eminence over "ways of knowing" (p. 6). In answer to their question, Clark and Jensen (1991) propose that this "transformed agenda" (p. 6) of reframed questions, methods, and research roles, would likely prove beneficial to the profession of teaching as "the moral dimensions of teaching, long neglected but deeply felt to be important, could move to the foreground" (p. 7). It is within this reframed research focus exploring ways of care within a "relational view of morality" (Clark & Jensen, 1991, p. 9) that the present study into teacher knowledge is situated.

Avenues of Research into Teacher Knowledge

In an analysis of research on interactive teaching, Yinger (1986) cites three avenues of research currently being pursued to describe teachers' knowledge. According to Yinger, one avenue of study involves researchers in an examination of teachers' organizational frameworks and subject matter knowledge through the process of in-depth interviews. A second avenue of research considers teachers' intellectual biographies as a method for studying subject matter knowledge. A third approach to describing teachers' knowledge is predicated on the work of Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin who have shifted the emphasis from subject matter knowledge to personal practical knowledge.

Drawing upon a narrative approach, Clandinin and Connelly use a variety of research techniques including in-depth interviews, observations, and written narratives to describe a practitioner's "narrative unity" which Yinger (1986) defines as "the expression of biography and history in a person's understanding, which is embedded in the social history of a situation (e.g., schools, schooling)" (p. 17). Yinger concludes by noting that in examining teachers' knowledge from several perspectives, including observing teachers using their knowledge within the ecological perspective of the classroom context, these three related avenues of research, while still in their early stages of development, will nonetheless promote an increasingly "sophisticated and realistic" (p. 17) perspective concerning practitioners' knowledge.

Elbaz (1991) furthers the discussion of teacher knowledge and narrative inquiry by suggesting that research on language and discourse which addresses teaching "from the inside" should consider related themes of teaching stories, the ordinary versus extraordinary nature of teaching participants, and teachers' voices. With respect to teaching stories, Elbaz cautions that the "legitimacy" (p. 3) of employing stories in educational research can be undermined if they are viewed simply as a way of couching research in a language accessible to teachers. Elbaz (1991) argues instead that teaching stories must be conceptualized as "that which most adequately constitutes and presents teachers' knowledge" (p. 3).

Citing her own, as well as the work of others including Connelly and Clandinin, Elbaz (1991) notes that in these research initiatives teaching stories are not viewed as vehicles in which to present data or as a methodology in and of itself, but instead as the essence of researchers' work. Elbaz suggests that considering stories from this "ecological perspective" (Elbaz, 1993, p. 189) represents a shift in the way teachers' knowledge is presently understood, and should provide direction in terms of future studies in the area. Elbaz (1991) explains:

> For this work, the story is not that which links teacher thought and action, for thought and action are not seen as separate domains to begin with. Rather, the story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense. (p. 3)

While considering story as the "landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers," Elbaz (1991) suggests that the conventional casting of the teacher participant as functioning on a continuum from novice to expert should be reframed to consider the "extraordinary" embedded within the work of the "ordinary" teacher participant. In emphasizing that which is extraordinary in context or perspective from within the work of the ordinary teacher participant, Elbaz suggests that research initiatives provide a forum within which the voice of the teacher is heard. Arguing from the position that teacher thought and behavior are inseparable, Elbaz notes that in providing a forum within which the tacit aspects of teacher knowledge is explored, researchers need to consider aspects of this tacit knowledge including its non-linear nature, integrated and highly contextualized quality, complexity of routines and patterns, and personally meaningful focus.

Further, Elbaz (1991) argues that teacher voice must be represented in relation to the culture and traditions society has embedded within the schooling process. In addition, Elbaz maintains that teacher voice must be considered within a moral and critical framework in that teachers function from a moral standpoint of concern for what is in the best interests of students. It is Elbaz's contention that the shared landscape of story provides a forum within which the voices of teacher and researcher are heard, and within which a sense of community may be fostered.

Connected Roles of Practitioner and Researcher

Polkinghorne (1988) defines research as "a systematic attempt to go beyond the cursory view of something in order to generate a greater depth of understanding" (p.10). In a separate discussion, Takanishi (1981) considers research as "disciplined inquiry" (p. 86). According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) researchers are often defined as members of the academic community who conduct research on teaching, with teachers viewed initially as the objects of the research and eventually the consumers and implementers. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) contrast research on teaching to teacher research which involves practitioners in "systematic, intentional inquiry carried out by teachers" (p. 3). The authors elaborate in the following words:

> By *systematic* we refer primarily to ways of gathering and recording information, documenting experiences inside and outside of classrooms, and making some kind of written record. By *intentional* we signal that teacher research is an activity that is planned rather than spontaneous. And by *inquiry* we suggest that teacher research stems from or generates questions and reflects teachers' desires to make sense of their experiences - to adopt a learning stance or openness toward classroom life. (p. 3)

While recognizing the benefits inherent in teacher research initiatives, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) are also cognizant of the demands this type of inquiry places on participating teachers. They note that teacher research initiatives often exist on the periphery of grade schools with participants meeting outside school hours, whereas university based inquiry is highly valued and accorded internal support within the academic community. To assist teachers in the process of systematic and intentional inquiry, the authors suggest that networks be established which provide the necessary collaboration and support. Lieberman (1992) concurs with Cochran-Smith and Lytle in advocating for the establishment of professional networks, suggesting that researchers and school based educators engage in "authentic collaboration" (p. 10). Lieberman (1992) states:

> The role of the academic is no longer that of the dispassionate observer, but rather that of an insider and an outsider at the same time: one who dares to "speak the

> unspeakable," because she must document what she sees, but also one who cares deeply and passionately, and empathizes with the problems of practice. She must hold on to a larger vision of what is possible, while not avoiding or being unaware of the inevitable conflicts that come from being a part of both worlds. (p. 10)

In discussing teaching as research, Duckworth (1986) suggests an analogy between teaching and psychotherapy in that both professions build from connected roles of practitioner and researcher. According to Duckworth, both professions are framed within the reality of practice with research questions emerging out of the daily realities of practice. Duckworth (1986) maintains that in adopting this perspective, the role of a researcher involves understanding the way in which others construct their own meaning in order to "gain insight" and "make sense of it as it happens" (p. 490). While advocating for a more integrated view of teaching and research, Duckworth cautions that the current realities of classroom teaching which emphasize centralized policy making over localized autonomy contribute to the continuing separation of the teaching profession from the profession of educational research. However, Duckworth (1986) contends that if educational resources were allocated in a different manner, teaching, "practiced as a process of engaging learners in trying to make sense" (p. 494), would represent the hallmark of research related to the development of human learning.

In a similar line of thinking, Eisner (1988) argues that experience, as recorded through our senses and framed within our emerging conceptual structures, should not be viewed as limited to the form of representation chosen to express an understanding of that experience. As Eisner (1988) maintains, while language represents one form in which to communicate our understanding, "language in the propositional sense does not exhaust either the limits of thought, the limits of knowledge, or the limits of intelligence" (p. 16). In relating experience and form of representation to the field of educational research, Eisner argues that the politics of method have led researchers to represent teaching experiences within a narrowly defined framework of linguistic conventions which are often viewed as objective or value-free, and which tend to distance the researcher from the observed phenomena.

Noting that all methods and forms of representation are partial understandings and subjective points of view, Eisner (1988) advocates for an expansion of educational research methods and forms of representation in order to honor the primacy of experience in schools. Eisner maintains that in abandoning the "commando raids" (p. 19) approach to classroom research in favor of collaboration with teaching colleagues in classrooms, educational research will emphasize the primacy of experience and the expansion of method in order to understand and enrich the educational process.

In agreement with Eisner (1988) that educational research needs to move away from research on teachers towards an increasingly collegial stance of research with teachers, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) suggest that a missing element in our current knowledge about teaching involves the voices of teaching practitioners. Cochran-Smith and Lytle argue that over the last twenty years, the two paradigms which have influenced research on teaching are process-product studies and interpretive-based classroom ecology studies. According to these authors, within the dominant process-product paradigm of educational research is an approach which views teaching as a linear activity, with the role of the teacher being that of a technician whose behaviors are causal to the desired effect of increased student learning. Within this paradigm, research on teaching is provided by outside authorities based in the university, and teachers are charged with implementing the research findings within their own classroom contexts.

Again according to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990), the less prevalent paradigm involving research on teaching includes an array of qualitative studies influenced by the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and linguistics which provide detailed descriptions of specific classroom events. Within this classroom ecology paradigm educational researchers seek to interpret and construct meaning on behalf of the teachers involved, and through the process, may "silence"

(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) either intentionally or not, the voices of the teacher participants.

Exploring Teaching Stories

In commenting on the role teachers play in school improvement, Connelly and Clandinin (1993) suggest that both historically and currently teachers have been viewed as a "conduit" (p. 4) through which pass policies addressing educational reform. By contrast, Connelly and Clandinin (1993) adopt the perspective that teachers play a central role in school improvement in that they represent

> creative, independent agents of their own, as people who are composing lives that make a difference and that those differences are important in children's learning. (p. 4)

According to these authors, underlying this perspective are four assumptions relating to teacher education including the following: teacher education represents a lifelong process; teacher education needs to be considered within an historical context; teaching represents an "educative relationship" (p. 5) among individuals; and, related to their first assumption, teacher education needs to be viewed as a continuum which is lifelong in duration.

In adopting the perspective that teachers play a central role in educational reform, with the attendant assumptions providing the foundation for this stance, Connelly and Clandinin (1993) distance themselves from the metaphor of teacher education as an injection" (p. 6) of knowledge, skills, and attitudes into prospective and practicing teachers, but rather as a "reconstruction" involving a "process of rethinking and rebuilding the past" (p. 7). In advancing the metaphor of teacher education as reconstruction, Connelly and Clandinin (1993) suggest that through a collaborative process of telling, retelling, and responding to teaching stories, these reflections may lead to "awakenings" and "transformations" (p. 18) in teaching practice.

In a separate article, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) provide a framework within which to use a narrative inquiry approach in educational research. Noting a distinction between phenomenon and method, Connelly and Clandinin suggest that the term "story" be associated with the phenomenon, and the term "narrative" with the inquiry or method. In that narrative inquiry is concerned with the primacy of experience and the qualities of life, these authors situate the narrative method within the qualitative research paradigm. (An excellent discussion relating to narrative method within qualitative research is found in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994.) In its focus on providing a forum within which the voice of teachers are heard, Clandinin (1988), and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) align narrative inquiry with feminist research.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) continue by suggesting that the process of narrative inquiry is entered through "negotiation of a shared narrative unity" (p. 3) between researcher and participants, in such a manner that there develops a sense of community and collegiality within the relationship - a sense of community and collegiality which Noddings (1986) maintains focuses on research for teaching. In that teacher voice is often silent in other research methods, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note the importance of initially providing a forum within which teacher voice assumes prominence, with the research voice gradually becoming involved in a multidimensional process of "a shared narrative construction and reconstruction" (p. 5). Connelly and Clandinin suggest that through such data sources as field notes of shared experience, interviews, storytelling, letter writing, autobiographical and biographical writings, and classroom artifacts, the researcher and teacher collaboratively engage in a process of construction and reconstruction of a narrative unity.

As has been addressed in the initial chapter of the present study, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) caution against attempting to fit the language of narrative into the language deemed appropriate for other research methods. Suggesting instead that a "good" narrative account honors the holistic nature of narrative through its complexity of explanation, at the same time providing an invitation to be read and lived vicariously, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) propose that narrative writing consider the two notions of "adequacy," a concern for thoroughness in the account, and "plausibility," a consideration for the perceived truthfulness of the account. Further, the authors note the importance of structuring a narrative account through a discussion of the "scene," including characters, physical environments, and contexts, and the "plot" which involves addressing issues of temporal constructions. According to Connelly and Clandinin, the final narrative account, understood in the context of a continual unfolding of life, draws upon these concepts of scene and plot in order to offer an explanation and interpretation of the shared construction of meaning.

In discussing narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) draw attention to the complexities and risks inherent within this particular methodology. The authors note the existence of "multiple I's" in narrative inquiry, ranging from the voice of the researcher, to the participant, to the research participant, to the narrative critic, and possibly to the theory builder. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) observe:

> We are, in narrative inquiry, constructing narratives at several levels. At one level it is the personal narratives and the jointly shared and constructed narratives that are told in the research writing, but narrative researchers are compelled to move beyond the telling of the lived story to tell the research story. (p. 10)

As can be seen from this process of moving beyond a shared construction of meaning to a shared construction of a research story, there exists a multiplicity of "I's" in the telling of the story.

As with Connelly and Clandinin, Lincoln and Denzin (1994) also acknowledge complexities and risks inherent within methodologies which tell "stories from the field" (p. 582). Recognizing that stories from the field are represented in text by researchers who are themselves influenced by their life experiences, and further, that the texts themselves are "socially, historically, politically, and culturally located" (p. 582), Lincoln and Denzin (1994) note that there exists an inner tension which might never be fully resolved within the research community. While Lincoln and Denzin predict the tension will continue, these authors also suggest that through the expansion of research methods there will occur in the future, resolutions which do not exist at present.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) conclude their discussion of narrative inquiry by drawing attention once again to the relationship of researcher and participant in educational studies. In their view, narrative inquiry represents a "gentle" (p. 12) process in which researchers work collaboratively with teachers in exploring the fundamentals of education, including what it means to educate and what it means to be educated. Connelly and Clandinin also suggest that the collaborative storying inherent within the narrative method provides a role for researchers beyond that of listening and recording the storytelling of others, to a researcher/ teacher role which recognizes that researchers do not function simply as scribes but are also storytellers and story livers. In their final comments, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) propose that through narrative inquiry researchers and practitioners may be provided with a renewed sense of collegiality and direction in their growth as educators:

> Our own work then becomes one of learning to tell and live a new mutually constructed account of inquiry in teaching and learning. What emerges from this mutual relationship are new stories of teachers and learners as curriculum makers, stories that hold new possibilities for both researchers and teachers and for those who read their stories. (p. 12)

The collaborative stance between practitioner and researcher advocated by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) is founded upon ethical principles of narrative research. In Clandinin's and Connelly's (1988) view, entry or exit in classroom research must be established as a negotiated process in which both researcher and teacher participate and benefit. Further, the teaching participant is viewed as a knowing person actively collaborating in the research, and not merely as a subject in the research. Thus, the purpose of narrative research is fully disclosed at the outset of the research as an effort to construct and reconstruct meaning through multiple interpretations of text, not as a formulation of researcher judgments concerning teaching practices. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1988), these principles of ethical research represent interrelated aspects of the all encompassing notion of "negotiation of narrative" which recognizes that collaborative research "constitutes a relationship" (p. 281).

Emerging Stories and Making Connections

As has been indicated, the present study adopts the perspective as articulated by Connelly and Clandinin (1993) that through the collaborative process of telling, retelling, and responding to teaching stories, participants' reflections can lead to awakenings and transformations in teaching practice - in the case of the present study, leading to an enriched understanding of, and renewed focus on, the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as teachers of young children. In terms of its commitment to fostering a relational and caring stance among teacher researchers as we carried out a systematic and intentional inquiry into the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women practitioners, and further, in its emphasis on creating a narrative unity from the construction and reconstruction of our collaborative stories, narrative inquiry served to ground educational research into our practice based work as teachers of young children.

Equal vulnerability in collaborative storying. My involvement as one of the teacher researchers closely approximated that which is ascribed to Hollingsworth (1992, 1994), wherein she assumes equal vulnerability with the other members of her study group. In becoming involved in the sustained and intimate nature of collaborative conversation, I accepted an equal measure of vulnerability with the other members of my group. Hollingsworth (1992) explains this feature of researcher vulnerability in these words:

> That is, the researcher is cast in as critical a perspective as the researched. The investigator is not an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but appears as a real, historical individual whose beliefs and behaviors must be open to critical examination. (p. 377)

From this stance of equal vulnerability, I functioned within the teacher researcher community as a story teller and story liver, as well as scribe. In my capacity as scribe I was responsible for transcribing our collaborative conversations, and for making these written transcripts available for review and analysis by the other members of our group. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that through this process of being story tellers and story livers, the stories of the other participants merge with our own to create new stories which they term "collaborative stories" (p. 12). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), what finally emerges from these collaborative stories is "a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participant" (p. 12). It was our mutually constructed story illustrating the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge which we, as practitioners and researchers, sought to make explicit through the present study.

Connected storying. From our first gathering on October 30, 1991, meetings were audio taped, with copies of transcriptions made available at each meeting for research participants to review and edit. For the purposes of the present study, summaries and transcriptions were collected through to the March 11, 1993 meeting in order to have approximately one and one-half years of data available for examination. While transcriptions and summaries of proceedings constituted the primary data base, other sources of data included brief autobiographical sketches, memos, letters, telephone conversations, and incidental journal entries. We also had limited opportunities to visit one another's classrooms.

Over time, the transcriptions and other sources of data provided ways to explore the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. Drawing upon this rich data base, stories were initially read and re-read with the intention of examining how the stories were connected with one another. Elbaz (1992) describes this connective process, or "narrative echoing" (p. 423), as one in which the story of one teacher provides the emotional bridging to the story of another. Leading from this exploration, the emerging stories were eventually considered in relation to the themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference, as framed by Elbaz (1992).

Research Participants

Membership in the group ultimately consisted of nine women whose teaching responsibilities involved working with pre-primary and primary aged (kindergarten through year three) children. At the outset, the other five members of the research study were all acquaintances with whom I had either worked or who were known to me through mutual friends. The extension of the research group to include an additional three members came as a result of original members suggesting that they had teaching colleagues who were also interested in meeting to discuss what it was like to be a primary school teacher in the nineties, and, eventually, to explore the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge. The organization of the research context to include a pot luck dinner in my home was viewed as a natural extension to our relationship, and was considered conducive to collaborative storying.

The decision to provide anonymity to group members was made at our initial meeting in October of 1991. Although we acknowledged that teacher research is currently viewed as "one of the vehicles for the professionalization and empowerment of teachers" (Shulman, 1990, p. 14), and that increasingly teachers are demanding public recognition and credit for their own teaching stories, we maintained that the cloak of anonymity placed over this present research would accord individual privacy within the public context of a recorded collaborative storying study. As a result of this decision, pseudonyms were selected for each of the research participants, with the pseudonyms being assigned to individuals during the course of a private telephone conversation with me. The following discussion provides a brief biographical sketch of the participants, using their pseudonyms and focusing on their educational and experiential backgrounds, as well as their reflections on what drew them into the field of teaching.

Allison. Allison credits her parents with providing the interest and encouragement to pursue a teaching career. Both parents were teachers, and Allison volunteered her time during junior and senior high school to assist her mother in elementary classrooms. To broaden her understanding of early childhood education, Allison spent six months working in a daycare and one year working as a kindergarten assistant during the course of her university education. Allison explains her route into early childhood education in these words:

> When I went to University, there was no question - I knew I wanted to be an early childhood teacher, and I took two years of university - and I would talk to my mom who was interested in learning and teaching, but I still wasn't finding university meaningful - so then I took a year off and worked as a kindergarten assistant, and I had a male kindergarten teacher who was so kind and gentle, and in the whole year, I never heard him raise his voice - never saw him give a child a mean look, and he really taught me by modeling. And when I went back to university, I knew what I wanted and would go to profs and say the project is lovely, but it's not where I'm at - and honestly they were usually good about it. And then I took six months off and worked in a daycare.
>
> (January 23, 1992)

Allison has taught in a large, urban school board for twelve years, in programs serving the needs of children kindergarten through year six. Her teaching responsibilities have included providing instruction to combined and multi-age groupings in a variety of socio-economic settings. She has also provided leadership service through her ongoing commitment to conducting workshops and inservices for other teachers of young children. Allison holds an Early Childhood Services (ECS) Diploma in addition to her bachelor's degree in education. She is married and has one pre-primary aged child.

Dorothy. Dorothy also had relatives involved in education, and followed the traditional route into teaching by pursuing an undergraduate degree in education upon completion of high school. Always dreaming of becoming a teacher, Dorothy was involved in recreational leadership through high school and university. After graduation, Dorothy taught a year four class in a small, rural school district for two years before choosing to supply teach for six years while her two children were preschoolers. Upon being hired by a large, urban school district, Dorothy taught full time in a literacy-based resource setting for children kindergarten through year six before moving to her present administrative assignment where she has worked for three years overseeing programming for children with special needs, and offering literacy-based resource assistance, guidance, and counseling. Dorothy holds a bachelor degree in elementary education. Her husband is also a teacher.

Glenda. While not having relatives involved in education, Glenda nonetheless followed a traditional route into teaching by pursuing an undergraduate degree in education upon completion of high school. Glenda's year was the last one in which a student could begin her or his work as a teacher after two years of university education. Glenda completed three years of her degree before being hired as a teacher of kindergarten-aged children. Over a number of summer school sessions she completed her fourth year of elementary education, specializing in early childhood education.

Other than one year as a nursery school teacher, Glenda's entire teaching career has been at the kindergarten level. She taught for three years prior to the creation of Early Childhood Services in 1973, and three years subsequent to the provincial programming initiative coming into effect. After a lengthy period spent at home raising her three children, Glenda is currently supply teaching for a large, urban school district, and pursuing graduate studies in early childhood and special education at the University of Alberta. Glenda is married, and her oldest child is currently completing the requirements for an undergraduate degree in secondary education.

In response to my request for a brief autobiographical sketch concerning her education and experiences as a primary teacher, Glenda provided what Connelly and Clandinin (1990) term a series of events, or "chronicle," (p. 9) which are linked through an underlying personal meaning. Given the fact that Glenda's kindergarten teaching experience was the only one in the group which spanned the time before and immediately after the implementation of Early Childhood Services in Alberta in 1973, I have excerpted a segment of her chronicle to provide a snapshot into her personal practical knowledge of kindergarten programming prior to, and immediately after, the ECS implementation in the early seventies:

> I had some tables, some chairs, some plasticine, a few crayons, and a few cans of tempera paint, but no running water... a record player but no records. I ran out and bought a book. I raided my mom's basement for dress-up clothes, dolls, beads for stringing, puzzles, and my brother's cars, trucks, and tractors - something told me to leave the war toys in their boxes. I bought baby tubs and filled them with rice, sand, and water. One of the fathers had built a fence and had scraps of wood left over. He converted these bits and pieces into a beautifully sanded set of blocks. This man also gave me a stamp pad and made me a rubber stamp in the shape of a star. What is a teacher without a star? I really didn't know I needed one, but I did use it on all of the children's work and they were thrilled!
>
> (a reflection concerning programming prior to 1973)
>
> Someone down at Central Office bought a play house, a real sand table, and a water table on legs so no one could fall into it and get wet. It was great!
>
> (a reflection on kindergarten programming immediately subsequent to 1973)
>
> (Excerpted from an autobiographical sketch provided for the present study at our February 4, 1993, dinner meeting)

Gertrude. In contrast to the other three teacher researchers, Gertrude entered the field of education through a serendipitous route. After a brief period of medical training in nursing, Gertrude determined that she would rather work as a secondary teacher, and completed the requirements for that degree before teaching English for one year at the high school level. A family relocation to eastern Canada drew Gertrude into the federal civil service for a five year term. After a ten year period at home in which she raised two children, Gertrude obtained her ECS diploma and has worked in day care administration, pre-primary, and primary teaching for the last nine years. Gertrude has provided leadership in the field through her ongoing involvement in the conducting of workshops and inservices. Gertrude is married and her two children are now in their late teens.

Helen. Helen entered the field of early childhood education through the parent route. After completing three years of teacher education at the secondary school level, Helen remained at home to care for her two preschool aged children. She completed her fourth year in elementary education, majoring in early childhood education, at the same time continuing to be active as a volunteer in her children's school. Helen explained her route into early childhood education in these words:

> I took the first three years and then I got married and had a family and then I decided to go back - and at that time

> you could teach with three years - this is a LONG time back. I think my youngest child was in kindergarten and I spent a lot of time volunteering at the school and decided it was time to go back and get paid for all the work I had been doing. So when my daughter was in kindergarten, I started back for my fourth year and did that in one year with some summer and spring sessions.
>
> (January 23, 1992)

Helen has worked for sixteen years in pre-primary and primary classrooms, with the majority of her time being devoted to working in segregated programs serving the needs of children with language and physical challenges. Helen contends that teaching is "in the family blood." Her husband is also involved in education, and one child is currently teaching in a primary special needs program, while the other child is pursuing education at the University of Alberta.

Susan. Susan entered the field of early childhood education through the serendipitous route. Upon completion of a science degree in mathematics and computer literacy, Susan taught high school mathematics for one and one-half years. After this brief teaching experience in secondary education, she was persuaded by a friend to join her Montessori staff, teaching children between the ages of three and five. Susan worked in the Montessori program for one year before moving into the private sector to work as a computer analyst. After two years as a computer analyst, Susan returned to the Montessori program because, in her words:

> It was okay (the work as a computer analyst). The work was intellectually challenging, the pay was good, the staff was great, but teaching called to me again. I decided I really could not live forever with good money but only machines and three weeks holiday to look forward to. I missed the children, the relationships we built, the interaction, and watching them blossom as they grew and learned.
>
> (An excerpt from autobiographical sketch provided for the present study at our February 4, 1993, dinner meeting.)

Upon completion of a second one-year term with the Montessori program, Susan returned to university to pursue a masters degree in elementary education, with a specialization in early childhood education. Upon graduation, Susan was hired by a large, urban school district and has taught kindergarten in an inner city community for the past four years. Susan's husband is also involved in education as a school psychologist.

Linda. Linda entered the field of early childhood education through the traditional route. Upon completion of a bachelor of arts in psychology and sociology, Linda enrolled as an undergraduate in the department of elementary education. Following completion of her bachelors degree in education, specializing in early childhood education, Linda worked for two and one-half years in segregated programs serving the special needs of pre-primary and primary aged children. She has also worked for two years in a regular school setting, teaching children in the primary years.

Linda was the first one in her family to pursue a career in education, and had dreamed from a young age of becoming an elementary school teacher. She explained her interest in becoming a teacher in these words:

> I've always had an interest in kids - ever since I can remember, I played teacher with my little brother. But I've always loved - I have a passion for teaching. I'm the first teacher in my family.
>
> (January 23, 1992)

Linda is married and has two preschool aged children.

Cathy. Cathy also entered the field of early childhood education through the serendipitous route. Originally planning to work as a speech and language pathologist, Cathy entered the faculty of sciences. After completing one year of her degree in science, Cathy applied for, but did not gain admittance into, the speech and language pathology program. On the encouragement of a friend who was pursuing a degree in special education, and her own grandmother who was a long-time teacher of special education in the province and a "huge inspiration," Cathy applied for, and was admitted to, the faculty of education, majoring in special education and language arts.

Although she was admitted into the program of speech and language pathology the following year, as well as being admitted into the diploma program in nursing, Cathy decided to continue with her studies in education. Within a year of graduation, Cathy completed the requirements for a provincial ECS Diploma.

Cathy has taught for seven years in segregated settings serving the needs of preschool and kindergarten-aged children with language and physical challenges, and two years in a combined grouping of primary aged children within a regular setting. In a conversation detailing her educational and experiential background, Cathy noted that she knows now that she made the right decision to become a teacher of young children, quipping that "chalk, not blood, is running through my veins" (Cathy, personal communication, April 4, 1994). She is married with two pre-primary aged children.

Maureen. As author of this study, I have relegated myself to last in this brief series of biographical sketches, with mine, of course, being autobiographical in nature. In a shared sentiment with Dorothy and Linda, I dreamed of becoming a teacher from the time I was in primary school. Not only did I think my teachers were wonderful, but I also had a relative who was most respected in the field of education in the province. My Aunt Mary Stratton was an elementary school teacher and language arts consultant who developed the educational radio program "Speech Explorers" during the late 1950's and early 1960's, and, coincidentally, was also my husband's year two teacher.

After completing a bachelor of arts degree in history and geography, I pursued elementary education through a professional diploma after degree program (PD/AD), before graduating in 1975. I was hired by the Edmonton Catholic School Board and worked for two years as a year one teacher before resigning my teaching contract to remain at home with my children for the next five years.

In 1983, the same year in which I completed the requirements for an ECS Diploma, I again was hired as a teacher - this time by Edmonton Public Schools. I have worked with this latter school district in a number of capacities including pre-primary and primary teacher (kindergarten and year one), resource teacher (literacy based intervention for children in years one through five), consulting (primary language arts), and curriculum coordinator (including classroom teaching, overseeing practicum requirements of student teachers in the early childhood route, and coordinating the programming requirements of children with special needs). I completed the requirements for a masters degree in elementary education in 1989, specializing in early childhood education, and have been working towards a doctorate degree, studying in the areas of teacher education and language learning. I am married to Robert Lemieux, and have two teenage children, Lisa and John.

Around the Dinner Table

From late October of 1991, to mid March of 1993, the nine members of our research community met in collaborative conversation around the dinner table in my home. Although we once experimented with eating first and then moving to the living room to audio tape, we found our conversations flowed more naturally when we remained seated around the table for the duration of the dinner meeting. Cognizant as we were with time constraints, we began our meeting promptly at 6:30 p.m. with a pot luck dinner, and adjourned at 9:00 p.m. Susan was in charge of operating the tape recorder which was left on for the duration of the meeting, except at times when one of us requested that our story not be audio taped for transcription. Those of us who chose to continue our conversation after 9:00 p.m. were welcome to do so, but the audio taping was discontinued at the official adjournment time.

I was well acquainted with the members of our initial group, and had at least been previously introduced to the three members who joined us during the second year of our study. However, this sense of familiarity was not shared by others in the group, and it took a period of time for us to develop a sense of relation and trust within our research community. While initially our conversations addressed issues and concerns in a detached and objective manner, as a sense of relation and trust evolved, we found ourselves conversing about the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women practitioners - a knowledge which was embedded within the affective and centered within the narrative. It was through this evolution from detached describers of anecdotes, to storytellers of personally relevant narratives of meaning, that we coalesced into a collaborative community of teacher researchers, constructing our own meaning as teaching practitioners and women.

The following three chapters illustrate the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge, utilizing as a frame Elbaz's (1992) themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference. Chapter four details our disposition of hopefulness, while chapter five highlights our attentiveness to the growth and development of individual children within our care. Chapter six considers the quality of our caring for the differences among our students. As will be discussed at length in chapter seven, over the course of our collaborative conversations we drew upon Elbaz's (1992) frame to engage in an interrelated process of connecting our knowing with her work, at the same time constructing our own meanings.

CHAPTER IV

A DISPOSITION OF HOPEFULNESS

This chapter is the first of three which explores the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. In illustrating the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge, I proposed to the other members of our teacher research group that we consider as our frame Elbaz's (1992) themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference. I had become acquainted with Elbaz's themes through my thesis supervisor, Dr. Janis Blakey, who had provided me with a copy of Elbaz's (1992) article towards the latter part of the first year of our study.

At the same time as I was reflecting on Elbaz's (1992) discussion of the moral, I was reading our transcripts with the focus on identifying and highlighting narrative threads within our teaching stories. Over the course of several readings of our transcripts, I began to see that embedded within our collaborative conversations describing what it was like to be teachers of young children in the nineties were emerging stories which spoke of our hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women practitioners. After conversing about her work with the other members of our group, it was agreed that Elbaz's themes provided us with a meaningful frame for our study.

From reading and re-reading transcripts of our collaborative conversations, there evolved a search for illustrations of Elbaz's (1992) themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference within our personal practical knowledge as teachers of young children. To employ an analogy, we drew upon Elbaz's (1992) work as a "lens" (Clandinin, personal communication, July 22, 1994) in our search to make explicit that which was moral within our personal practical knowledge. Through the vehicle of collaborative conversation, we constructed the following "shared narrative unity" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3) as primary practitioners and women.

Hopefulness Defined

The Funk and Wagnalls (1974) dictionary defines the word hope as "to desire with expectation of fulfillment; one who or that which is a cause of hopeful expectation" (p. 309). Elbaz (1992) furthers our understanding of the word by suggesting that the disposition of hopefulness within teaching can be viewed within a passive or active stance, with the passive stance involving a patience to wait and see how a child will grow and develop, and an active stance involving the fostering of that growth by the teacher. Elbaz continues by noting that the hopefulness articulated by teachers is neither naive nor sentimental, but instead based upon their clear understanding of the children in their programs as well as their personal practical knowledge of the one teaching or the one taught. Elbaz (1992) explains:

> It is important to stress that the hopefulness we hear in these teachers' voices is not naive or sentimental: Each of them calls forth the images of young children, their own or their pupils, precisely because they have a sense of how far we can stray from the most cherished hopes we entertain for these children. The hopefulness, more importantly, rests not on idealized images but on a detailed and concrete perception of children's lives.
> (p. 426)

In seeking to clarify the concept of hopefulness, it is important to discuss what Elbaz (1992) describes as the "dark side" of the concept. In Elbaz's view, despair, or the absence of hope, can also be heard in the voices of teachers. Elbaz suggests that this despair occurs not so much as a result of teachers believing that their understanding of students is no longer accurate, but usually as a response to the institutional structures of schooling such as large class sizes or narrowly defined achievement standards. While stories presented in this chapter reflect both sides of the concept of hopefulness, it is important to note how our collective and steadfast disposition of hopefulness ultimately tended to bolster our periodic and individual disillusionment.

Disposition of Hopefulness: A Passive Stance

While not often discussed in our group, occasionally we would cite examples of how assuming a passive stance in terms of children's growth would yield positive results. One example of assuming a passive stance within a disposition of hopefulness was provided by Linda in her description of her four year old daughter "Paula's" emerging color recognition, and how that experience influenced the way in which she dealt with color recognition in her combined kindergarten/year one program. (As with the adult participants in the present study, "Paula" and the other children mentioned in our conversations have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity). Linda spoke of her passive stance towards color recognition in these words:

> Linda: You know, from Paula, she has taught me she'll learn regardless of whether I'm going to sit there and say "Red, this is red. Now let's do red for the whole day. Red!" Because I have never sat down and said to her - you know, I'll be reading a book and I'll say this is a red dress but I would never drill it - and she'll come back and tell me she wants a purple vitamin and pick it herself. It's not something I sat down with her and drilled. And I think if I see that in my own child, then I'm going to take this understanding and apply it in my classroom. There are things I don't need to teach directly like colors and rhyming words - or

> concepts such as addresses, phone numbers, and shapes. It's a world awareness we should emphasize.
>
> (April 9, 1992)

Within Linda's observation about children's emerging color recognition can be found not only her perception that certain concepts could be taught in a non-directed and incidental manner - a perception shared by others in our group - but also her understanding of teaching as embedded within the framework of mothering. While not usually advocating for the adoption of a passive stance within our disposition of hopefulness, there were times we discussed certain assumptions, or "rules of thumb," which we held generally about young children's academic growth at particular year levels. One such example dealt with the age at which most children were expected to become independent readers, and the rule of thumb concerning the range at which this skill generally became ensconced for the majority of children.

The conversation cited below involved Allison, Glenda, and Helen, and occurred during a discussion in which Allison and Linda were speaking about literacy instruction and the first few years of teaching, at a time in which one's personal practical knowledge become integrally meshed. Allison described the process of integration in these words: "Your first few years (are) when you are establishing what you truly believe. You know what you believe intellectually and you're meshing all that with your life experiences" (January 23, 1992). A few minutes after making this observation about personal practical knowledge and the first few years of teaching, Allison continued by conversing about a rule of thumb she held concerning young children's emerging literacy behaviors.

> Allison: I have taught different grade levels - you people can confirm this or dispute it - the general rule of thumb that I have worked out is that by the end of grade one, about two-thirds of children generally are reading at or above grade level. About a third of them are reading at a beginning to mid grade one level. Is that your experience, Glenda?
>
> Others in group murmur their agreement.
>
> Glenda: Well, I'm not an experienced grade one teacher.
>
> Allison: Well, it's that one-third you have to defend and ensure they get to go on to grade two. Because what happens by the end of grade two is there are a few who are not reading at grade level. Most of those who started grade two at the beginning or mid grade one level make their gains in that year. Not everyone learns to read at the same pace. Not everyone starts at the same place.
>
> Helen: To expect someone who is here to get to here - this much gain - (gesturing with her hands)
>
> Allison: And that doesn't mean that you don't work with them at their reading level - make sure you provide them with the appropriate materials and instruction - but the fact is that about a third come into grade two this way. And then by grade three, what's the name of that book? Green and white one - NAEYC appropriate practices (referring to Bredekamp, 1986) - yeah, yeah!

Glenda: I don't have that book.

Allison: Oh, you must have that book. There is a quote which says something to the effect that by age eight, most children have learned to read and for those other few, they will need extended literacy experiences. And it's just bang on!

(January 23, 1992)

As can be seen from this conversation concerning a rule of thumb in early literacy behaviors, Allison, as well as Helen and others, demonstrated a passive stance within their disposition of hopefulness. In adopting this passive stance, they maintained that for the majority of children being provided with an appropriate literacy program, the process of becoming competent readers followed a fairly typical pattern whereby at the end of their second year in school (following kindergarten), the majority of children were able to read at or above grade level. This passive stance within their disposition of hopefulness did not seem to be predicated upon the particular class in which one taught, but instead held as a truism for the majority of children within this age range. While earlier literacy experiences in the home and nursery school were cited as significant factors to the ease and timeliness at which young children developed print competency, the lack thereof was not perceived by members of the group as insurmountable. In the absence of a learning disability, it was held by the group that all children would demonstrate increasing competency with print so that, with few exceptions, by the end of their second year of school (after kindergarten), children were functioning at grade level or beyond.

Disposition of Hopefulness: An Active Stance

Ascribing to the rule of thumb that for the vast majority of children, learning to read at or above grade level was accomplished by the second year of school following kindergarten, our group also recognized the need to actively assist children with their emerging literacy skills. While this acknowledgment of the need to assume an active stance within our disposition of hopefulness was underscored often in our dinner meetings, two stories have been selected to provide an insight into our group's understanding of the teacher's role in reading and writing development.

The first literacy story was excerpted from a conversation we had in October of 1992, concerning how children come to an understanding of print at different times and through different literary experiences. In this initial storying, we had been discussing how a young child sometimes seems to be making little progress in reading and writing despite active and ongoing work at school and in the home. Our storying then turned to those children who, after demonstrating limited progress for a lengthy period of time, made significant gains in their literacy understanding within a remarkably short time frame. We compared this sudden and significant gain to "a light being turned on."

The following has been excerpted from a lengthy storying process in which several group members contributed examples of children who made remarkable literacy gains after lengthy periods of seemingly minimal progress. This particular conversation highlighted one of Allison's teaching experiences and occurred among several members of the group. Also embedded within the context of this conversation was a comment made by Gertrude about grade two being "the take-off age." In making this comment, Gertrude demonstrated an interweaving of her passive stance within a conversation which was predominantly framed within an active stance.

> Maureen: Possibly. The point of the matter is, it's all of a sudden clicking. And it's amazing when the light goes on. I remember that last year I had a little girl and plod, plod, plod. And her mother read to her at home and plod, plod, plod. And her mother was really frantic because her son had never really learned to read - plod, plod, plod. And I'm looking at this little girl and she's bright and she's with it and I keep thinking - oh, I'll try it this way, try it this way, try it this way. Finally, in about February, March, just like you said, right, she's reading everything. And I'm thinking - oh, she must have memorized that. Oh, maybe she memorized that. I don't think she could have memorized all of this. And she just had it.
>
> Allison: Just like a little girl I had last year, too. I'll never forget this little girl, "Joan," struggling through it all and her printing was atrocious. She would have

such a hard time just doing a sentence off the board. I mean spacing - this is in June. She couldn't read a word of what she had just written. It was a mess. And I'm thinking - oh, I should have seen it coming.

Glenda: Is this k.(kindergarten) or (year) one?

Allison: This is grade one. Well, she wasn't at the grade one level - she was a bit lower. So this year she comes back and...

Gertrude: Grade two is the take-off age.

Allison: Wow! I couldn't believe it. She knew it, boy! She brought up her first story and she said, "Look at this!" She knew it. And I said, "Joan, that is beautiful!" I meant it. It was perfect! I am so proud of her.

Helen: Doesn't that excite you?

Allison: Yeah, it does because I thought for her it just kicked in somewhere between July and September, when I wasn't there.

Maureen: But, that's the thing. What if you had retained her?

Allison: Yeah. Oh, I would have felt terrible.

Glenda: Yeah. And you just cannot predict that.

Allison: She would have folded her tent.

Maureen: And said, "I'm stupid. I can't do it. My teacher says I can't do it."

Allison: She is reading so well now. When she raises her hand, you know, I want her to read the whole story because I still can't believe it.

> Gertrude: I think that experience of having kids in (year) one and taking them into (year) two probably changes your attitude about a lot of things.
>
> Allison: Absolutely.
>
> (October 28, 1992)

As can be seen, in building upon one another's literacy experiences the teachers in our group not only found support in our collective hopefulness that the vast majority of young children would develop requisite literacy skills in their first three years of school (kindergarten through year two), but also a belief that actively engaging children in literacy activities was critical for that growth to occur. In this respect, our group members supported the concept of emergent literacy (e.g., Taylor, 1983; Butler & Clay, 1983; Hall, 1987; Strickland & Morrow, 1989), with its attendant emphasis on actively engaging children in stimulating and meaningful literacy activities throughout their early years in their home and school environments. Illustrative of this active emergent literacy stance was the following dialogue - again excerpted from the October 28, 1992 meeting. As a point of clarification, this excerpt includes a reference to one of Allison's students working on a piece of writing in Gertrude's classroom. During the 1992-1993 school year, Allison and Gertrude worked in the same school across the hall from each other, and team-taught with each other one period a day.

> Maureen: Well, that's the thing though. But really my year one children had a stupendous kindergarten

experience. These children, even if they were just coming into emergent literacy - they had been read to so much in their kindergarten program, they had been exposed to so much print, they had been exposed to the idea of journals, that they just came into it. And then the ones who were really independent readers just took off. It was amazing, it really was.

Allison: I was telling these ladies that one of the little guys in my class was tested yesterday by the reading specialist and he comes out below the first percentile in every area but visual memory - he's a little higher in that. And the reading specialist, who's a wonderful person, said, "Now you shouldn't even try to teach this little guy to read. Don't even get into that. Just lots of talk, just lots of language development kinds of stuff." And today, he (the student) wrote "Happy Spooknight to you! Happy Spooknight to you! Happy Spooknight, dear vampire! Happy Spooknight to you!" Now mind you, it was a pattern that he had done and done and done. But he copied that and then he found the word vampire on his own. He knew where to look and he knew it was a "v". That was an important word. And it wasn't with me that he was doing this, actually. He's in my room but he was across the hall with Gertrude at this point. And Gertrude said, "Uhmm."

Maureen: When you say that, that goes back to this idea of readiness or ready for, and what do we do in the interim? Do we just leave them?

Allison: Exactly. He still needs to be absolutely and fully immersed in reading and writing activities, and he still needs to have the expectation that he model at least some reading and writing.

(October 28, 1992)

By assuming an active stance within our disposition of hopefulness, we maintained that the vast majority of children in our care would develop increasingly sophisticated literacy competencies. This adoption of an active stance within our disposition of hopefulness was not restricted to reading and writing skills alone. Although literacy discussions often represented a focusing topic during our dinner meetings, we also conversed about other academic subjects including mathematics instruction. The following conversation has been excerpted as an example of this latter interest in mathematics. As in the preceding excerpts, there exists within the following conversation the adoption of an active stance within our disposition of hopefulness. In the conversation I demonstrated my hopefulness that one of my students would eventually grasp a particular concept, at the same time assuming an active stance in ensuring that the learning indeed occurred.

The conversation took place during our December 5, 1991 dinner meeting, and has been excerpted from a wide ranging conversation concerning the teaching of young children with severe behavior disorders. During this meeting, I was relating to the group an incident that occurred in my year one classroom during a time when one of the children was exhibiting increasingly disruptive and violent behavior. During a conversation relating to the difficult behaviors I had to deal with that day, I remarked on an exciting breakthrough another child, "Kate," had made in her understanding of the addition process.

> Maureen: I had a little girl, Kate - she's so conscientious, but it takes a long time for her to understand a concept - but anyway we're trying to understand equal, but there is no understanding base for her - so I wanted her to understand it doesn't matter if you have 2 and 3 on one side, or 4 and 1, it must be equal in number of manipulatives to the other side with 5 manipulatives. So I'm into our second week with people manipulatives, furniture manipulatives, small manipulatives.
>
> Allison: You know in junior high math, a+b=c, I never got it and probably I didn't get it because I didn't get the concept of addition in the early grades.
>
> Maureen: So, I'm working on this concept for another day, and I line up these stools (2 and 1) on one side, and 3 on the other, and someone holding the plus sign, and Kate stood up and said, "Well, Mrs. L., 2 and 1 equals 3 because it's the same number on one side as the other." And I thought I was going to faint, and Kate said, "It's just what you said - that naughty plus sign - just take that naughty plus sign out of the way, and it equals to the same number." So we took out the naughty plus sign, who happened to be one of the other children, and put him in the corner, and Kate said, "See - it's equal on both sides." And it's those moments...
>
> Allison: That you think there couldn't be a better profession to be in.
>
> Maureen: I believe you should write these moments down, write them down.

(December 5, 1991)

An Active Stance Towards Children With Special Needs

The decision to include this particular story concerning one child's growth in mathematical reasoning was made in part because it contributes to our understanding of the active stance within our disposition of hopefulness that teachers of young children demonstrate in their daily work in primary programs, but also in part because this conversation of one child's progress was embedded within our larger and ongoing theme of working with children who have special needs. Not only did this theme of working with children who have special needs represent a thread woven through every one of our meetings, it was one that alternated for our individual members between hopefulness and exasperation, which occasionally bordered for some of us onto the dark side of hope - despair.

Prior to commencing a discussion concerning the dark side of hope, I have included a brief story relating to Glenda's eternal hopefulness that children with physical or cognitive limitations can always be challenged to grow academically. Again, this conversation occurred during our December 5, 1991 meeting in which the focus of the entire meeting seemed to be working with children who have special needs. Glenda had been explaining her work in a kindergarten cluster program - a program which integrates a limited number of children with special needs within a core group of typically developing children. She was describing her work with one child for whom fine motor skills was deemed an area of difficulty.

> Glenda: He couldn't use a pencil but he could do beautiful work with little pieces of lego. Well, if you can do beautiful work with little pieces of lego, then you can hold a pencil. And then he held it here (pointing to the lower end of a pencil), and I told the special education teacher just to break the pencil. If he wants to hold near the end, and he's having trouble with balancing the pencil, break it off and give him the tip close to the end.
>
> Allison: Makes sense.
>
> Maureen: A lot of it is just common sense.
>
> Glenda: We had this stupid program whereby if we got him printing just his name by the end of the year, we patted ourselves on the back. I knew he was capable of more writing than that.
>
> (December 5, 1991)

As can be seen from this anecdote, Glenda adopted an active stance within her disposition of hopefulness by maintaining that this particular child could progress in his fine motor skills through encouragement and instructional modifications - in this case through a crude, yet effective, modification to his pencil. Also noteworthy was Glenda's focus on modifying programming for a child with special needs, at the same time recognizing that the child required intellectual challenge and rigor to progress. Generally agreed upon within our group was the notion that this tension, or balancing, in programming between modification considerations and intellectual stimulation required continual monitoring and careful observation on the part of the primary teacher. In teaching children with special needs, we also maintained that this balancing required the adoption of an active stance within our disposition of hopefulness.

The Dark Side of Hope

Elbaz (1992) notes that within the moral dimension there exists a sense of hopefulness as well as the darker side of hope; that is, feelings of disillusionment or even despair. Within our group, there were times when one or more of us voiced through our stories this darker side of hope, this feeling of disillusionment. These stories of disillusionment relative to the perceived impact we had in the lives of students within our care were at once powerful and poignant, and often related on the basis that they would not be recorded and transcribed for use within this written document. To honor this commitment to our group's privacy, I have selected from our recorded and transcribed stories, a few which serve to illustrate the sense of disillusionment sometimes felt when teaching children whose behaviors were challenging, or when working with parents who were critical of the efforts of school staff.

Certainly one of the primary causes of disillusionment within our group was in working with children whose behaviors were becoming increasingly unacceptable within the parameters of the regular primary classroom. The following poignant story was related by Susan and Linda during our February, 1993 dinner meeting. The excerpt begins with Gertrude and Allison discussing the need for primary teachers to display nurturance and caring in their working relationships with students. Their comments concerning this requirement for nurturance and care prompted Linda and Susan to talk about their concerns with teaching a group of needy kindergarten and year one aged children in their respective inner city schools. That Susan and Linda were secure enough to voice their current frustration over the impact they were having in their classrooms during a time in our meeting when Gertrude and Allison were discussing the ongoing requirement for teacher care and nurturance, attests to the support and rapport which developed over time within our group.

> Gertrude: I would hate to see someone being in the institution of teaching, or whatever, and say that there can't be nurturing in a primary classroom. Because I believe that is part of my job to allow this child to make a transition between home and school. And a comfortable transition. A transition full of love and understanding and encouragement.
>
> Allison: And you know that how a person feels about themselves will affect their learning. So you know if you want kids to reach their potential, you have to fill that part of it up, too.
>
> Gertrude: But you get so much more with honey than you do with vinegar. So I don't know how you can just get up there - point blank - teach and demand.

Linda: A lot of times you can, but I must admit I am very disillusioned about the amount of time that regular teachers have to spend disciplining in the large groups, rather than teaching. This is my first go at it - this kind of thing (referring to her first year in an integrated classroom setting rather than a segregated site). I see so many of them have such high needs that I haven't been able to reconcile my expectations with what action I can do. I want to do everything with these kids - one little boy is potentially suicidal - and what can I do?

Susan: I have the worst room I have ever taught. I am drained. I don't think I have taught yet. I think I told you I have sixteen kids who should receive special funding out of twenty-nine, and all of them have problems. Many of them have been sexually abused, most of them are coming from physically abusive homes, all of them non-readers. I am just...

Linda: Can you blame them?

Susan: I wouldn't bother to learn to read.

Linda: One of them comes to school - whenever he does, he shows up at 10:00 or 10:30 am - and falls asleep at his desk.

Susan: Do you know what is more crippling, almost? I think this because of the attitude of the kids at our school. That is very similar to that - is the "cheque." The welfare cheque. Many a kid has said to a resource room teacher - she has said, "What are you going to do if you quit school now in grade five, if you don't learn to read in school?" "We get the cheque every month - who cares?" That is their attitude. "What does it matter?"

Linda: Unfortunately, they are probably fourth or fifth generation. Because you have a baby, and as soon as you can, you get the cheque. And get your own apartment.

Susan: So, I mean, this year I am having a lot of struggles. Maybe because you do try to help the kids as much as possible at school, and then you contact parents time and time again, and they just don't seem to care. And it is really hard to hear someone say they don't care. How could you not care for your own child, when I care for your child? And I don't even know your child as well as you do, and I care.

Allison: And then you have to come home to your own child.

Linda: And you look at this child and think...

Allison: And you have been drained all day, and she needs you, and you have to give to her.

Linda: You have to. She has been sick since - my daughter (Paula) - has been sick since Sunday with a really high fever. I have been devastated for four days. And I go to work thinking, and half of me is back home, and the rest is at school. These kids need me, and when I get back home, I am thinking who will take care of me?

(February 6, 1993)

A number of issues were raised within the context of the preceding conversation. These included: the difficulties inherent in working with children whose social and emotional needs were not being adequately met in their homes; the frustration in dealing with parents who were struggling with the demands of their own lives and were perhaps unable to provide for the social, emotional, or physical well being of their children; and the continual balancing required of women teachers between the professional demands of school and the personal demands of home. While the latter dilemma of women teachers balancing the demands of home and school will be addressed in the next chapter dealing with attentiveness to individual children, the issue of working with children demonstrating behaviors which undermine the quality of the teaching/learning process represented an ongoing catalyst for discussion at our meetings, and will be addressed for the remainder of this chapter. As indicated in the stories provided by Linda and Susan, maintaining a disposition of hopefulness when working with children whose basic needs were not being met, or who were exhibiting challenging behaviors in the classroom, proved, at times, to be disillusioning.

In terms of working with children whose behaviors continually interfered with the teaching/learning process, all the members of our group indicated they had taught such students, and further, that the experience created within them feelings of disillusionment and occasionally despair. It was at these difficult times that members noted a feeling of having "lost it" or "lost the magic." The contention seemed to be that this seemingly illusive quality of maintaining a positive tone within the classroom, at the same time actively engaging children in their own learning, was demonstrated once by the individual teacher but had now disappeared. This diminished feeling of self-confidence as a classroom teacher, this feeling of having "lost the magic," was described similarly by recently graduated teachers and experienced practitioners within our group. An excerpt from our December, 1991 meeting has been included to provide a sense of the physical and emotional drain sometimes experienced by teachers who are working with children exhibiting difficult behaviors within primary classrooms.

The story was recorded at our December 1991 meeting, during a discussion relating to the administrative and peer support required for teachers working with children whose behaviors were interfering with the teaching/learning process. In the following story, I entered the conversation by talking about how one teaching colleague described the "magic" to me, and how I subsequently understood the notion of professional competence when challenged with a child in my class whose behaviors were becoming increasingly disruptive and violent towards his peers and me. Of profound concern for me was sensing that other adults were attaching to my behavior in dealing with the child, an image of an uncaring and "brutish" teacher. Following my story, Susan continued the line of discussion by speaking about the behavioral differences she observed between her morning and afternoon kindergarten classes, and the difficulties she encountered in maintaining a disposition of hopefulness when dealing with these challenging classroom behaviors.

> Maureen: Maybe. But I've got to say as a teacher - a teacher down the hall said this to me and I

understood exactly what she was trying to say - she had a very out of control child in her class last year - I have her in my class this year, but medicated, she is a sweety, and I never believed I would agree with medication, but I lived with her most of September and she needs it - but anyway, this teaching colleague said she had twenty-three years of teaching and mostly in year one, and she got to believe it was her - that she had lost the knack, the magic, that she couldn't handle a classroom anymore. And she said that's really terrible when a child can do that to you and take away your self-confidence. Now that is what is happening to me in my classroom. You're walking down the hallway carrying a tantruming child past parents and fellow teachers. The other day we had a highly renowned children's author speaking in our school library, and my teaching assistant and I were having to carry this screaming child again down the hall past the presentation in the library - and you feel like a brute - a real brute -

Allison: Terrible teacher.

Maureen: Yes. Your knees are cut away - they're cut away in terms of your confidence -

Susan: And then the next day, when he's not here and you see how your class behaves, you know you do have it. I mean thank God I have my afternoon kindergarten class because I have a hellish morning and then my afternoon class comes in and they're wonderful and they're quiet and they're cooperative and they play together, and I think "Thank God, it's not me. It can't be me." And thankfully, it's my afternoon class, and I can go home feeling okay. If I went home after my morning class, I would probably have resigned from teaching.

(December 5, 1991)

Community of Support

Although the preceding story highlighted the frustrations Susan and I were experiencing in working with challenging student behaviors within our classrooms, all the members of our group recounted similar stories of students demonstrating unacceptable classroom behaviors such as temper tantrums, physical aggression towards peers and/or teachers, and significant episodes of noncompliance. What we, as a group, suggested made the difference between dealing effectively with these difficult behaviors and struggling to survive the school year was the extent to which colleagues and administrators supported our efforts in the classroom. That we had, and would continue to have within our primary classrooms, certain children whose behaviors negatively affected the classroom climate and teaching/learning process was considered a virtual certainty. How colleagues and administrators supported our work represented the decisive factor in strengthening or undermining our confidence as capable and caring professionals. In effect, our ability to demonstrate a disposition of hopefulness amid the challenges inherent in working with children exhibiting difficult behaviors was predicated upon the support and assistance we experienced within our teaching contexts.

In the following excerpt, the importance of working within a supportive teaching context was addressed by Helen when she offered that by their actions, my former staff signaled that the child in my classroom exhibiting increasingly disruptive and violent behaviors was, in actuality, a shared responsibility of every member of our school staff. This contention that "we are teachers to all the children in our school" represented for our group the decisive factor in maintaining our disposition of hopefulness when working with difficult student behaviors. The following was excerpted from a conversation at our February, 1993 meeting concerning support networks for teachers dealing with challenging student behaviors.

> Helen: We had a seminar, or whatever, the other evening. One of the things the speaker said was when a teacher cries or especially when they have reached that point in tears - never ignore tears, he said.
>
> Allison: Teachers, I think, teachers think that they can't really cry out for help because they represent such pivotal figures in the classroom. They are everything to that class. They hold it all together. And when they feel that some of it is missing - it is starting to fall apart - you blame yourself.
>
> Helen: Sure.
>
> Gertrude: That is right.
>
> Allison: I am not doing my job. I'm not a good teacher. I'm not a strong person. I have lost my touch. I have lost everything I have worked for. And you really start to wonder.
>
> Maureen: You're right. But in this case, right away I thought I am an experienced teacher, and right away I had the assistance from colleagues, and right away I was working with an outstanding, supportive principal. He couldn't do enough.

Allison: And good colleagues...

Maureen: Wonderful colleagues. Yeah, I've had teachers who come in when he has had a temper tantrum to take over the class. I've had teachers come down and dismiss the children so I could deal with the temper tantrum, or they would deal with the temper tantrum and I would deal with the rest of the class.

Helen: What you are saying is this child belongs to the whole school.

Allison: Yes. That is such a good point.

(February 6, 1993)

The requirement for peer and administrative support when working with difficult student behaviors represented a fundamental premise we held as group members. Our group maintained that through timely and effective intervention by teaching colleagues and administrators, a primary teacher experiencing difficulty with student behavior could extricate herself from a feeling of disillusionment, to reframe the experience within a disposition of hopefulness wherein she again viewed herself as a capable and caring professional. While the preceding excerpt focused on teaching colleagues and my administrator assisting me in continuing the routines of the classroom during times of significant disruption, the following excerpt from our April, 1992 meeting highlights the requirement for this kind of assistance in terms of the physical safety of the classroom teacher. In this story, Helen was asked to retell how she injured herself while working with her group of primary aged children with special needs.

Helen: Well, it happened at home time and I was on my own. No, the aide wasn't there that day. I was on my own at home time. And I had quite an exuberant crew. One of them who tantrums at home time, like that's his daily thing - routine - and just a very interesting group. So, "Mark" went running out the door which is what I thought he would do. But he hid underneath a couch in the hall and I thought - that's fine. He can stay there until the others are done. He basically wanted me to go after him and he was doing some other attention seeking things. So, I was attending to the others. I had a couple of kids - they were out in the hall getting their coats on. And then one little boy, "Ned," who is really an immature boy - he just copies everybody, and he just really gets silly. And that day happened to be the day he was Mark's best friend. And so, of course, Mark came out from under the couch, and Ned thought this would be fun. So he decided he was going to also start to run around this big pillar in the hall. And I thought - okay, Mark's fine there but I want Ned back on task because he's just playing the other's little games. So, I thought - I'm going to be really sly. I'm going to outsmart this little five year old. So he went around the pillar one way. I thought - ah, ha! He doesn't know I'm going to go the other way because he thinks I'm just going to chase him like a cat and mouse. No, I'm not going to play cat and mouse today. So, I decided I'd flip around but as I was flipping around, and I wasn't wearing high heel shoes that day...

Maureen: It was one of the questions I asked over the telephone. And were you wearing high heels? She got a lot of sympathy from me. You were wearing high heels, weren't you, Helen? (laughter)

> Helen: I had little low flats on. And my right leg went zooming out in front of me and my left leg stayed! And so I did these wonderful splits. Actually, it was about the time when the figure skating was going on. And it happened so quickly and you think - oh, well, I'm just tripping a bit. No big deal. But, you know, just as I fell, with this leg sort of way out, I just felt this strange sensation right through my side. No really, like my whole side went numb and I thought - this is a little more than a typical fall.
>
> (April, 1992)

Helen concluded her story by noting that she was assisted initially by one of the children in her class who ran to the office for adult support. Helen was taken to the hospital for examination, and was away from teaching for two weeks with a leg injury.

A Sense of Humor

Helen's story serves not only to reinforce the point that from a safety perspective, there exists an ongoing requirement for collegial and student support when working with difficult student behaviors, but also illustrates how a sense of humor has the potential to assist a teacher in reframing a disillusioning story of personal injury resulting from challenging student behaviors, into one centered within a disposition of hopefulness. Not only did Helen put up with some teasing about her perchance for wearing high heel shoes to work, but it was Helen who related to us that upon being wheeled into the hospital, she asked for a bag to cover her head as she felt slightly embarrassed entering hospital having injured her leg as a result of chasing one of her five year old students around the hallway.

A sense of humor was considered by many in our group as a powerful tonic to overcome periodic bouts of disillusionment with respect to the impact we had as primary teachers working with children exhibiting difficult classroom behaviors. In a further illustration of the manner in which she drew upon humor to reframe her story from one of disillusionment to one of hopefulness, Helen concluded her narration by describing the way in which her students displayed their affection towards her by their cooperation as she was being eased into a wheelchair and transported to hospital. As Helen aptly demonstrated through her story, the ability to gently laugh at herself or at the situation served to diminish her focus on the physical pain, instead drawing her again to that essential disposition of hopefulness which characterized her work with young children.

> Helen: It was the sweetest thing, though, because all the kids came up with this big hug and kiss - "Are you okay?" And I told them that I would be away tomorrow and (laughter from the group). "I don't think I'll be here tomorrow." But, you know, really the kids were, sort of, when the chips were down, they can do it. And I think that's a big thing, is to know the things that you've taught them and you've sort of seen them do, and you think - they can do this. But they don't do it all the time. But that's when you find out how they can really, really

> function. Because when they had to be quite independent, they just got their little selves ready.
>
> (April 9, 1992)

Disposition of Hopefulness: A Reconsideration

In concluding this chapter, which has focused on illustrating the disposition of our hopefulness as women early childhood practitioners, Elbaz's (1992) remarks again bear consideration. As has been noted in the beginning of the chapter, Elbaz contends that a disposition of hopefulness, expressed through a passive or active stance, is neither naive nor sentimental, but rather based upon teachers' clear understanding of children in their programs. The stories included in this chapter were chosen to illustrate how the hopefulness which characterized our work as teachers of young children was indeed founded upon our understanding of children's learning and development, and carefully framed within our knowledge of curriculum. In this respect, our understanding of hopefulness was considered similar to that expressed by Elbaz.

In terms of Elbaz's (1992) remarks concerning the dark side of hope, with its attendant feelings of disillusionment or even despair, she suggests that teachers respond in this manner when confronted with institutional structures of schooling such as large class sizes or narrowly defined achievement standards. For the teachers in our group, working with difficult student behaviors was considered the decisive factor leading some of us to feel periodically disillusioned with our effectiveness as primary teachers. In this respect, our group did not tend to cite institutional structures, but rather relationships with students, as fostering or diminishing our sense of hopefulness as primary practitioners. Moreover, we noted that when working with difficult student behavior, the manner in which we were supported by colleagues and administrators played a critical role in maintaining a hopeful demeanor within our classroom context. Many of us also relied upon a well developed sense of humor in reframing our stories from ones of disillusionment to ones centered within a disposition of hopefulness.

In our perception that the disposition of hopefulness was integrally connected with our interpersonal relationships among students and staff, we indicated our commitment to precepts inherent within the ethic of care. That is, as primary practitioners we considered our disposition of hopefulness to be directly related to the level of relatedness, receptivity, and responsiveness we experienced in our interactions with students and staff. This level of relatedness became even more significant at times when we were working with challenging student behaviors. During such times of stress in dealing with challenging student behaviors, the level of receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness demonstrated by other students or by fellow staff was considered significant in reframing our teaching stories from ones of disillusionment or despair, to ones centered within the disposition of hopefulness.

In maintaining a disposition of hopefulness in our work as primary practitioners, we acknowledged not only the importance of students and staff relating to us within an ethic of care, but also the value inherent in meeting together as teaching colleagues to share our narratives of experience concerning our collective hopefulness. Clandinin (1992) talks about the need to construct "spaces" (p. 61) for the stories of teachers to be heard within the parameters of research journals. In acknowledging the value inherent in supporting one another through our collaborative storying, we suggested that we also needed to construct spaces for our storying to flourish. At our dinner meetings, we constructed such a space to maintain and extend our disposition of hopefulness as women practitioners within an ethic of care.

CHAPTER V

ATTENTIVENESS

In the preceding chapter, the reader was provided with illustrations relating to the disposition of hopefulness inherent within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. Another attribute of the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge involved attentiveness to the growth and development of individual children within our care. Noting that this attribute is generally associated with women, Elbaz (1992) describes attentiveness as the quality of being able to closely observe children's behaviors for subtle signs of growth, at the same time validating the quality of their current behaviors.

To provide this quality of attentiveness necessitates teachers' adoption of a constructionist perspective towards children's thinking. As Duckworth (1987) contends, in formulating an "insider's view" (p. 99) of how children are constructing meaning and generating connections, teachers are involved in meaning making both from the perspective of understanding children's current level of development and in terms of fostering further growth. Not only does this quality of attentiveness assist teachers in making connections between their own understanding and that of an individual student, it also provides the foundation for attentiveness to all the children within their care. The adoption of a constructionist perspective in relation to our work as early childhood practitioners assisted us in focusing upon the quality of our attentiveness to students, while also requiring of us an acknowledgment of the complexity inherent within primary school teaching. As Duckworth (1987) attests:

> Just as there is no simple solution to the arms race, there is no simple answer to how to work with children in the classroom. It is a matter of being present as a whole person, with your own thoughts and feelings, and of accepting children as whole people, with their thoughts and feelings. (p. 121)

The work of Paley (1986, 1990) provides an exemplar of one practitioner's quality of attentiveness to the growth and development of the pre-primary aged children within her care. Assuming the role of "investigative reporter" (Paley, 1986, p. 122), Paley seeks to make explicit her children's emerging understanding of their world by listening attentively to their stories as related within the context of their nursery school and kindergarten classrooms. In listening to her children's stories as they are dictated, acted out, and transcribed, Paley (1986) explores the act of teaching through a "daily search for the child's point of view" (p. 124). This daily search to understand her children's present reality, and to extend their future thinking by connecting their play to the outside world, reflects the quality of attentiveness Paley demonstrates to the individual children within her care.

According to Elbaz (1992) in ascribing to this quality of attentiveness, practitioners involve themselves in the complexities of children's lives. Elbaz maintains that the quality of attentiveness places demands on teachers to act in accordance with what they understand to be in the best interests of children, at the same time accepting that there exists no certainty as to what indeed represents these "best interests." In that there does not exist an absolute certainty as to what individual children require in order to grow and develop within the security of their classroom environment, Elbaz (1992) suggests that the moral quality of teacher attentiveness exists outside the realm of the technological culture, thus providing credence to her view that teaching should not be grounded in the "impersonal application of expert technology" (p. 427).

It could be argued that Elbaz's (1992) conceptualization of attentiveness is similar in orientation to Van Manen's (1986) understanding of "pedagogic thoughtfulness" (p. 12), and Aoki's (1987) consideration of "watchfulness" (p. 18). According to Van Manen (1986), pedagogic thoughtfulness is "child-watching" and involves a pedagogic relationship wherein the teacher "keeps in view the total existence of the developing child" (p. 18). In Van Manen's perspective, thoughtfulness represents a special type of knowledge which is maintained by the teacher through seeing, listening, and responding in such a way that the essential integrity of the child's life remains the central focus.

In a similar vein, Aoki (1987) speaks of watchfulness as occurring within a caring context in which the teacher is fully present to the child, and draws as an analogy the watchfulness a mother exhibits when guiding her child by the hand across a busy intersection. As with Elbaz (1992), Aoki rejects the technological notion of teachers functioning as information conduits whose work it is to disseminate information from programmed learning modules and then pass this information on to students. Instead, Aoki (1987) reaffirms the essential humanness of teaching by noting that in exemplars such as Christa McAuliffe (the American social studies teacher who died in the 1986 Challenger spaceship tragedy), "she is the teaching" (p. 12). Adopting the position that Elbaz's (1992) conceptualization of attentiveness is oriented in a similar fashion to Van Manen's (1986) notion of pedagogical thoughtfulness and Aoki's (1987) understanding of watchfulness, the remainder of the chapter will be devoted to sharing our collaborative conversations which illustrate the quality of attentiveness within the moral dimension of our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood educators.

In illustrating the quality of attentiveness within our personal practical knowledge, we have interwoven into the fabric of some of our collaborative stories conversations relating to our individual teaching dilemmas. In her work, Lampert (1985) views teachers as "dilemma managers" (p. 182), who cope with pedagogical dilemmas by "constructing solutions in the face of unsolvable problems" (p.184).

Arguing that the metaphor of teacher as dilemma manager grounds Lampert's work within the dispassionate and cognitive domain of studies into teacher knowledge, Clark and Jensen (1991) suggest that practitioners within caring professions such as teaching hold as their priority the non-cognitive "quality of human relationships" (p. 4). The present study was also aligned with the non-cognitive priorities of nurture and relation inherent within the ethic of care. Thus, we considered individual teaching dilemmas as embedded within the affective and centered within the narrative of our personal practical knowledge.

Attentiveness to Individual Children

Throughout the course of our conversations, many stories were shared which served to illustrate how the quality of attentiveness to individual children represented an important aspect of our work as early childhood practitioners. One example was provided by Allison in an October, 1992 meeting in which we had been sharing stories of how children in our classes had developed sophisticated reading and writing competencies prior to their entrance into school. It was within this context of family literacy stories that Allison shared her story of closely observing a child attending an orientation session in the spring prior to his fall entry into kindergarten.

> Allison: Well, I had a little guy, he's in my class this year,
> but I had him come in last spring for an orientation,

> cute little blond headed cherub. And I sat him down at the computer and he had never been at a computer. And I was going to carefully explain to him which little button you push and then what that meant on the screen and then take his little finger and help him push that button, and the whole thing, because they love the computers and this was just a really nice thing for him to remember so that when he comes back to school in the fall, he knows he can use these computers. He kept on getting ahead of me. And I finally figured out - I mean it took a couple of minutes - and I figured it out. He's reading the directions on the screen.

(October 28, 1992)

As can be seen from this story, it was a special kind of attentiveness, or skilled child-watching, which led Allison to a greater understanding of the current capabilities of this particular child. That this little boy was displaying strong literacy skills months prior to his entry into her kindergarten program represented important information for Allison in planning future literacy goals. As Elbaz (1992) aptly notes, attentiveness requires of teachers an ability to simultaneously honor present development and encourage future growth. In this particular story, Allison's attentiveness kept her oriented in the present life of the child, valuing him as a student in his own right, but also provided her with an insider's view of how the child was constructing meaning and generating connections in order to understand his current level of development and foster future growth.

While attentiveness to details of a child's growth and development was considered important in our work as early childhood practitioners, in rare circumstances it was not prudent to continue this focus on careful observation of the child. Instead of focusing primarily on the growth and development of the child, in these exceptional instances we needed to be attentive to the many interconnected and embedded stories of the family, the child, and ourselves. Just such a requirement was made of Allison in a dilemma she faced concerning the need to honor the cultural and religious values of a family, at the same time validating a child's particular developmental pattern. To provide a background to the story, at our December, 1991 meeting we had been discussing the differences between kindergarten and year one aged children in terms of general knowledge about classroom routines and transitions, and had drifted into the subject of fine motor skills typically demonstrated at different ages.

> Allison: One of the children in my class is Lebanese and his parents sent me a note that said please don't let our son print with his left hand. It's a big deal in his culture - a really big deal.
>
> Susan: Is he Muslim?
>
> Allison: Umm. It is a big deal because in their culture the left hand is the dirty hand. You talk about a mountain to climb. Why should they take my word for it that left handedness is generally a predisposition having to do with brain hemisphere

> dominance? My cousin's grandmother who was a teacher - she taught in one-room school houses and she was ninety-six, no ninety-four - she said to me, "You don't ever let them be left-handed. You put their left hand behind their back." She's always giving me these little words of advice. Like, "I hope you're teaching poetry."
>
> Maureen: You know, Allison, when it's such a cultural taboo, it's very difficult.
>
> Susan: If they are in Canada now, that's different.
>
> Glenda: This is more than his culture. He can't go into his Mosque and use his hand improperly or people will become concerned.
>
> Allison: I have chosen not to notice. Sometimes he uses his right hand and sometimes he uses his left.
>
> Maureen: You know when you watch children - in eating and pencil work - from my earliest recollections, (my son) John was so totally left-handed, and (my daughter) Lisa was totally right-handed. I just can't imagine as an infant, you know, switching toys and utensils and crayons to the right hand for John. It would have been so painful to do as a parent.
>
> (December 5, 1991)

As can be seen from Allison's story, the dilemma she faced as an early childhood practitioner involved choosing a course of action which would either allow her to remain consistent with the principles of child development or validate the prominent position of the family in the school life of young children. Her decision to adopt a passive stance towards her student's choice of handedness was not arrived at easily nor without certain misgivings, but chosen as a personal way of coping with her teaching dilemma in a manner she understood to be in the best interests of the child. For Allison, attentiveness to the concerns of the child's family was counterbalanced by her attentiveness to the child's particular developmental pattern and by her own attentiveness to the principles of child development. Of a secondary nature, the conversation also illustrated the manner in which group members constructed meaning and generated connections based upon our personal practical knowledge as mothers and early childhood teachers. As can be noted in the above excerpt, I drew upon my personal practical knowledge as mother of a left-handed child and primary school teacher in considering the dilemma Allison faced in being asked to intervene in the handedness of one of her students.

While we deemed it necessary that children within our care would be closely observed to appreciate their current abilities and to guide future growth, it was also valued when other adults invested the time to become attentive to our children's growth and development. An example of this sharing of observations was detailed by Helen at our January 23, 1992 dinner meeting. At the time of the retelling, Helen was teaching a group of five and six year old children in a segregated setting, with regular assistance from other professionals in the fields of nursing, physical and occupational therapy, and speech and language pathology.

The conversation centered around the subject of literacy instruction, as Linda discussed what she observed in the children's writing in her kindergarten/year one program. Helen shared a dilemma she experienced as she relinquished her teacher role to another staff member. Helen's story illustrated not only her attentiveness to the growth and development of her students, but also how the storying of dilemmas can result in hopeful restorying.

> Linda: I have a child who came in to grade one and had never printed even her name and now she is printing - not on the line, but I can read it.

> Helen: That's right. Last year we were really moving into writing, but this year the children are different. And I have a wonderful occupational therapist - you would love her - and she has been sort of testing the children and evaluating them and what not, but using play activities and watching them at play. And a nurse came in today and she sees them one way and we see them a totally different way, and today she was teaching a lesson on hygiene - nurses come in once a month to do something on hygiene - and it was quite good - she did quite a nice job with them. And I removed myself - you want to be core, be core. But I sat back and listened to the children's questions and what they were saying, and she asked me, "What have you been doing with them?" She had been judging them on what they do at recess, and they are different in

different environments. And people can see that these children can learn. We don't have the calendar up, but we do have up the days of the week, and...

Allison: Shocking!

Helen: Yes, not even in a row, and we talk about what is happening. And the children match winter words and pictures, and animal words and pictures on the pocket chart, and they think it is play. We showed her!

Allison: And that's what carries you through.

Helen: That's the best kind of evaluation because you can see beyond that isolated assessment on paper. The children are showing what they can do to someone who is quite doubtful.

(January 23, 1992)

The excitement and pride Helen felt in having another professional closely observe the learning growth of her students, and share in the joy of such growth, is clearly heard in Helen's restorying of her personal dilemma in relinquishing her role as teacher to another staff member. While the professionals who team taught in the classroom were already cognizant of their growth, it became a pleasant task for Helen to share that growth with other staff members who did not enjoy a similar intensity of classroom involvement. In so doing, Helen demonstrated how teachers can also learn from the attentiveness of others. In effect, Helen's restorying of a personal dilemma reaffirmed her commitment to maintaining a disposition of hopefulness in her work with the young children, at the same time illustrating how attentiveness to student growth and development can become a shared focus within a school setting.

Attentiveness to the Classroom Environment

In our conversations, we discussed the attribute of attentiveness both from the perspective of acknowledging and furthering the development of individual children, and also from the standpoint of fostering student growth through our attentiveness to the classroom environment. Our group maintained that classroom environment represented an important factor in the promotion of student growth and development. Many conversations focused on classroom organization, the availability of specific publishers' materials, and the quality and quantity of resources already housed in our classrooms. These conversations occurred especially during our late summer or early fall meetings; that is, during the initial period of organizing our classroom environments for the upcoming school year. From the many conversations held relating to the quality of our attentiveness to the classroom environment, two have been selected to provide an insight into our discussions; one concerning our preference for tables over desks, and the other dealing with noise level.

While members of our group found that the issue of having tables, as opposed to desks, in a primary classroom did not seem relevant to parents during their children's kindergarten year, for some parents it became a concern at the year one and two level. The issue was also relevant for parents of children who were being taught in a combined kindergarten/year one program. The following anecdote was related by Gertrude, who was teaching in a combined kindergarten/year one program during the 1992-93 school year. To provide a context for this story, Gertrude had been discussing her work as a consultant and primary teacher during the hectic opening days of the 1992 school year, and had noted that she had been out earlier in the week to speak to parents in another school about the feasibility of organizing their younger students into a combined kindergarten/year one class.

> Glenda: But the public has that feeling that, you know, in kindergarten they play and then when they go to grade one, they learn. So how could you possibly combine the two?
>
> Gertrude: That's right, Glenda, and it's hard. We had a family barbecue this week - Tuesday night - in the community. All the parents came, all the children came, the teachers did all the cooking, and it was just a powerful experience. Really a lovely kind of a bonding experience. And we were trying not to talk about school. But one of the moms came up to me and said, "Why are there no desks in grade one?" And I've answered this question to so many

> teachers and to so many schools and to so many parents over the last month, that I kind of lost it a bit and said, "Well, you know, the brains don't know where the bum is. So they can learn when they're sitting on a carpet. They can learn when they're sitting under my desk. They can learn when they're at a table and their brains just don't know!"

Glenda: You gave them this answer?

Gertrude: And then I thought - "Oh, my God! What have I (done)?" (laughter from the other members)

Gertrude: Allison is behind me just going, I thought, "What have you said?" But, honest to Pete.

Glenda: Say it like it is.

Allison: Well, after a while, it does get a little tedious.

Gertrude: Well, I just get a little fed up with answering the same question.

Allison: But, that happened twenty years ago too. There was this old granny, or whatever, and she screamed from the door - "Where are they? Where are they?" (again, laughter from the other members). She wanted to know where the desks were.

(September 24, 1992)

In the view of our group members, using tables rather than desks was based on the belief that student growth and development would be facilitated by providing children with a more social, supportive, and familiar environment. Tables allowed for flexibility in terms of grouping students and was familiar furniture to children from their kindergarten and nursery programs, and from their experiences in their own homes. Gertrude's reply to the parent contained an element of humor, but also demonstrated her dedication to being attentive to her students' growth and development regardless of the furniture or places they sat.

A second story which illustrated attentiveness to the classroom environment was provided by Allison at our May 14, 1992, dinner meeting. As with the issue of desks in primary classrooms, our members noted that some parents found the noise level associated with children talking to each other during learning centers a cause of some discomfiture. Alllison had related how a neighbor came by one morning for a visit in the kindergarten, and brought along her preschool aged child.

> Allison: Anyway, we were absorbed, and in walked my next door neighbor with her little three year old. And she had come to visit the nursery program across the hallway, but knew that my class was there because I had invited "Sandy" (the neighbor's preschool aged son) over to play in the kindergarten. So Sandy said, "Come and we'll go for a visit." And so they popped in to say "Hi!", which was really delightful. But anyway, talking about classroom noise, Sandy was trying to say something to his mom, and she finally said, "Sandy, I just can't hear you." And they were

standing this far from each other (motioning with her hands). But, you know, when you're absorbed in the learning, you don't hear the noise.

Helen: And that's the way the children are, too.

Allison: Exactly. But, oh my, what can you do when you have twenty-five bodies, in that relatively small space, talking? Playing with things that go bang and clang?

Glenda: Children don't play quietly.

Allison: No, and that's the whole point. We want them to talk. But, you know, I do find myself saying, "All right, let's keep the voices down." And sometimes it's truly necessary because somebody's STARTING TO TALK LIKE THIS, you know, really loudly. But other times I think to myself - "Man, it's noisy in here!" And then I walk around and I look at each center and they're all so involved in their learning...

Glenda: But, you know, if you had twenty-five kindergarten teachers in a small room like that - at centers...

Allison: It would be way noisier.

Glenda: So, we have to look at what we think is unrealistic to expect as children work in centers, thinking, now wait a minute.

Helen: And one of the definitions of a good teacher, traditionally, has been a quiet classroom.

> Glenda: A nice, quiet little classroom with everybody sitting very quietly and doing their thing.
>
> Helen: Or a classroom where there's active learning taking place - where children are involved.
>
> Allison: And, I mean, you could pop your head in and see the children all being very quiet. But you'd have to do that throughout the day - many times. That might be every fifteen minutes. But, if every time you pop in, you see that, you have to say, "Do children live here? What are they doing?"
>
> (May 14, 1992)

Concern over noise levels presented us with a topic for an ongoing conversation on what we valued as programming in early childhood classrooms. As Allison and other members suggested, the noise level associated with children talking about their learning was considered "active learning," and was to be encouraged as a way of promoting children's language and cognitive growth. Although the parent was not explicitly critical of the noise level in her kindergarten, Allison found herself questioning what she believed was appropriate in promoting active learning among a number of young children.

At different times in her story, Allison demonstrated a different attentiveness to classroom noise. Thus while initially talking about being inattentive to the noise level in her classroom, later in her story she noted her attentiveness to the noise by commenting on how she would instruct her students to keep "the voices down." As with Helen's dilemma in relinquishing her role as teacher to another staff member, Allison worked through her dilemma by restorying the experience to redefine what she considered to be an appropriate noise level in promoting active learning in her kindergarten. At the same time, Allison's efforts at restorying her experience attested to the quality of her attentiveness to the classroom environment.

Attentiveness, Nurturance, and Guilt

Typically, conversations relating to the quality of attentiveness were framed within a positive tone, but occasionally these conversations represented a forum within which individual members expressed feelings of discontentment, frustration, or even guilt over classroom events. One such conversation focused on the frustration and guilt Linda experienced in her work as a teacher of combined year one and two aged children. All group members occasionally experienced feelings of discontentment, frustration, and guilt relative to particular incidents in our classrooms. Linda's story serves as only one example among several which illustrated how the qualities of attentiveness and nurturance can also be attended by periodic bouts of disillusionment and even guilt.

Retold by Linda, the following three stories were excerpted from our February 6, 1993 meeting in which we talked about the difficulties of working with challenging student behaviors. In her second year of teaching in a public school (after two and one-half years in segregated special needs settings), Linda found that her once successful programming was increasingly disrupted by student behavior. At the same time she was acutely aware of the needs of her students for adult nurturing, as several of them were not having their basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter adequately met. As a result of the frequency and intensity of the behavioral disruptions, Linda experienced feelings of frustration and guilt in what she perceived to be her inability to meet the basic and educational needs of individual children in her class. The initial excerpt was drawn from the opening minutes of our meeting, with the additional two excerpts interspersed amid comments from other group members over the course of the evening.

> Linda: Maybe the transition from special education into regular education has been quite dramatic in terms of the behavioral expectations, and I am glad I have the nurturing. Because if I didn't, then a lot of these kids - none of them would be happy. Because unless you meet the basic needs first, then you have lost them. Because most of them - I guess I shouldn't say most - but quite a few of them have really significant problems that need to be addressed by the nurture, although I am university trained to present material in a certain way and to use different strategies, et. cetera. But that doesn't matter to a kid who has not had breakfast, or who

> went to bed at eleven o'clock the night before. I just found a tremendous change.

(February 6, 1993)

Later in the evening, Linda again demonstrated the quality of her attentiveness to individual children by talking about a student she had taught the year before, and was again teaching during the 1992-93 school term. While Linda began her story by noting her initial inattentiveness to a particular student, later she restoried the experience by talking about her attentiveness to the child's storying about a birthday celebration.

> Linda: I miss them. You know, one day I was there thinking about this little girl I had last year in grade one - she was one of these kids I was really worried about. She didn't have any kindergarten experience. You know, some people would say to me, "You better hold her back." I thought, no, I am going to push her ahead. You know, I have a gut feeling that this kid is going to be okay. Anyway, this year she is really doing well. She is printing and she just so loves to be in school. I went up to her desk about a week ago and said to her, "I honestly feel like I never see you. Come up to my desk. I want to talk to you for a while." So I brought her in the back and she shared some things about her birthday and stuff that she was doing. And I thought, I haven't talked to this little girl, probably for who knows when? Last year, I was giving her so much and this year it is like I have said, "You are okay because you are quiet and I know you are okay. I am not going to bother you."

> And what a lovely little girl she has turned into
> over the year.

(February 6, 1993)

Finally, during the closing minutes of the same meeting, Linda spoke about her frustration and guilt over not being able to provide what she considered important components of a quality early childhood program to the children in her class, as a result of the difficulties she was experiencing with challenging student behaviors.

> Linda: Last year - that is when I was seeing a lot of good things happening at the centers and in the class both morning and afternoon. The kids were younger as well. This year, I am thinking, I mean, you know how hard it is to come from an environment where you taught in centers and you taught in such a wonderful way that you really enjoyed it, and you always had stuff to put up on your walls? And you always had stuff the kids would take home? And you never ran out of ideas? To a situation where you have to teach so rigidly - with worksheet after worksheet, almost. Do you know what it is like? Because that is the only thing that will work with these kids. I mean, the first month I did this, I was in my principal's office everyday saying, "I can't do this. This is not me. This is not the way I do things. I can't." "You know," he said, "You are going to have to limit your transitions." I mean, I couldn't take them to the carpet - a foot - without them restless, hurting each other, or without them being so loud and noisy and obnoxious that I would have to stop and bring them back.

Allison: If things are going to fall apart, it is during transitions.

Linda: Right there.

Allison: Almost, you think, you are doing everything against what you know is important for children's natural learning and development.

Linda: Yeah. Exactly. God forbid, don't anybody walk in and evaluate. Thank God, I didn't have to go through evaluations this year. Because, I don't know that I would have been able to pull it off. Well, I really don't honestly know. It still bugs me that I have to walk into the room and all I see is thirty desks jammed together, and, you know, piles of stuff because I have no room. No centers, I mean, that really drives me. Especially when I went in September and had a craft center and house center and math center and a reading center, a listening center. And then the earphones got wrecked because they were pulling them apart. You know, the paint - forget it - because they were painting on the walls with their brushes. The books were getting ripped apart.

(February 6, 1993)

The three stories, presented together, provide insight into the dilemma Linda experienced as she struggled with her perception that she was not demonstrating attentiveness to her students, or displaying an acceptable quality of attentiveness to the classroom environment.

Whereas Linda's previous experience in regular and segregated programming included an abundance of well organized learning centers and consistent demonstrations of appropriate student behavior, she now found it difficult to both maintain the same organization of learning centers and deal effectively with challenging student behaviors. Although Linda recognized the value of learning centers, in her efforts to deal with challenging student behaviors, she found herself increasingly resorting to a teacher-directed format, and relying extensively on the use of worksheets. Distressed by this, Linda experienced a personal sense of guilt over her lack of attentiveness to the individual students within her care.

Linda's story is illustrative of teacher guilt which developed within the isolated context of a primary school classroom and was initially "owned" by one teacher. It also is a story of a teacher who refused to allow her bout with frustration and guilt to diminish her professional and personal well being. With our group's encouragement, Linda drew upon her own inner resources as well as staff and family to restory her experience into one framed within a disposition of hopefulness.

While retaining her commitment to care and nurturance within her classroom, Linda continued to alter her program delivery in such a way that she felt learning and growth could be sustained even though she recognized that such an organization would offer less involvement in child-directed learning and a substantial increase in teacher-directed initiatives. In her story, Linda cited two examples illustrating this focus on teacher-directed initiatives, including her increased reliance on worksheets and her ongoing review of rules during periods of transition. At the same time, Linda worked closely with her staff and administrator to establish a more positive learning climate, and continued her involvement in the teacher research community we had organized through our regular dinner meetings.

In addition, Linda placed a renewed emphasis on combining professional attentiveness with personal balance. For example, Linda took the opportunity afforded by her part-time teaching assignment to regularly volunteer in her daughter's nursery school program because she found the work most fulfilling, and it represented a way of remaining involved in her daughter's early education. With the support of her husband, Linda also organized her day in such a way that she could participate in a physical fitness program at her local recreation center for a period of one hour several times weekly.

Professional Attentiveness and Personal Balance: A Practitioner's Dilemma

Concern with sustaining professional attentiveness and personal balance was addressed not only by Linda, but also by other group members who considered this teaching dilemma both from the perspective of early role modeling experiences and present gender differences. In terms of the former perspective, Allison responded to Linda's story by noting that the present generation of women teachers might be considered a "transition generation," linking our childhood experiences which typically found our mothers working exclusively within the social context of the home, to the current family dynamics wherein the majority of mothers are employed at least part-time outside the home. Allison suggested that the difficulty women teachers encounter is in striving to achieve a professional and personal balance without the guidance and experience offered by significant women role models. Allison's comments were made towards the end of our February 6, 1993 dinner meeting, and related to Linda's story about care, attentiveness, and guilt in teaching.

> Allison: Without some real changes in our thinking and our support systems, it is our generation - I am serious - who will die young. I am serious. But at least in this generation, we will have watched each other. And Lisa's (referring to my teenage daughter) generation will probably have more role models. Most of us at this table had moms who were home. My mom worked, but she worked from the time I was mid-elementary, I think. So I really had a home mom for the first chunk of my life. We didn't see our moms balance the two - home and work - and our children will have seen that. And they will have more smarts, I hope.
>
> Helen: And you know that is what my oldest daughter sees, too. Mind you, I didn't start teaching until she was in grade one. But I think that is what she sees.
>
> Allison: Your balance?

Helen: How to get some balance.

Allison: You hope she does. But our generation also has daughters who are going to marry our sons, you know, and the sons will have seen this, too. And I hope that it will change. Because I don't think you can be a woman working in a caring, giving profession, and not have a husband and family who support you. First we are women, and then we go into a helping profession. We also require support.

(February 6, 1993)

In this brief exchange between Allison and Helen, conversation centered on the importance of providing for women, female role models who successfully balance professional and personal demands. While Allison noted that few in our generation of teachers had mothers who balanced the demands of home and outside work, both Helen and Allison suggested that our generation might provide this type of female role modeling for our own daughters, and, of equal importance, for our sons. In addition, Allison maintained that attentiveness to the qualities of care and nurturance represented the essence of teaching as a "helping profession," but argued for increased family support to assist women teachers with the dual demands of sustaining a nurturing presence in their professional work as teachers, and in their personal lives as wives and mothers.

This teaching dilemma of sustaining both professional attentiveness and personal balance in our work as early childhood practitioners was discussed not only from the perspective of early role modeling experiences, but also from the standpoint of possible gender differences. Although it must be noted that our group did not ascribe to the position that male teachers were more likely than female practitioners to sustain a balance between professional and personal demands, stories were generated which spoke to the differences in perspective observed within family members who were both teachers. To illustrate, Dorothy and her husband were both teachers. Dorothy taught at the elementary level and her husband at the secondary level. During a conversation on balancing professional attentiveness and personal well being, Dorothy offered the following insight into their contrasting coping styles:

> Dorothy: Do you know, I actually am very lucky because I'm married to a teacher as well. And he balances - I don't know how he does it - but he balances out his life very well. And just seeing that example is important, because he comes home and he's able to relax and let it go. Whereas, I hold on to more things for longer periods of time. And he'll look at me and say, "Dorothy, will you quit talking about that? Just let it go."
>
> Gertrude: That's your femininity.
>
> Dorothy: And I'm lucky because that thought - "Let it go, and then come downstairs and just, you know, go have a cup of coffee or tea, or go outside and watch

> the fire, or whatever" - it really is helpful. I was going to walk home from school two nights a week. It's only five and a half kilometres and it's beautiful down in the ravine. And then it got to be one night a week. And it's been two weeks since I've walked home once.
>
> Allison: Finding the time to take care of ourselves in the physical sense - like finding time for exercise.
>
> Helen: Or finding time to make a good lunch.
>
> (September 24, 1992)

Although the previous story concerning the contrasting coping styles of Dorothy and her husband was not included as an attempt to draw the conclusion that male teachers are more likely than female practitioners to successfully balance professional and personal demands, it might represent an area of future study both from the standpoint of male/female practitioner coping styles, and from the perspective of differences in balancing behaviors observed between elementary and secondary school teachers. What might be concluded from Dorothy's story was that she benefited both professionally and personally from the support of her spouse. As has been noted in Allison's discussion of women role models and Linda's story of support during times of professional frustration, ongoing and positive support from spouses represented a critical element in sustaining professional attentiveness and personal balance in our work as early childhood practitioners.

In discussing the relationship between family support and professional attentiveness, our group also credited children with assisting us in recognizing the need to balance professional and personal demands. In the following story, Helen spoke of her dilemma in achieving an appropriate balance between her professional and personal obligations during her first few years as a primary school teacher of children with special needs. At the time, Helen's two children were in their early years of elementary school.

> Helen: When I first started teaching and my children ("Jane" and "Annie") were a little bit older - they were in school - and I was at school only two blocks from my home, so it made it very easy to go back in the evening or on the weekends.
>
> Allison: Wonderful!
>
> Helen: Not wonderful, because when you are so keen and it is a special education Opportunity room and you are working with children who have so many demands on your emotions - you are mothering them in a way - and you are mothering the parents too. The parents needed as much, sometimes, as the children. And about halfway through the year - it must have been around Christmas time - and I said to my family that I had to go back to school because I had to make some things for my kids. And my youngest little girl looked at me and said, "Annie and I are your kids - not them!" And it made you kind of stand back and say, "You're right, you know." And you do - you get so emotionally involved until you realize it, and so

> when I reflect back on this story, I think we aren't
> ready for the emotional involvement it takes.

(May 14, 1992)

The comment made by Helen's young daughter prompted her to reflect upon the need to balance professional and personal attentiveness to benefit all the children in her care. As Helen's daughter astutely noted, her own children required a mother's attentiveness to their individual growth and development, just as her students needed a teacher's attentiveness to support their learning requirements. In her reflection, Helen restoried the experience to conclude that the profession of teaching demands of its practitioners, an emotional involvement which exceeds their prior expectations. Although we did not pursue Helen's restorying further, this dichotomy in terms of emotional involvement between one's previous expectation as a preservice teacher and present consideration as a practitioner, might represent a future focus of inquiry in teacher education.

Attentiveness and the Early Childhood Practitioner

In considering the aspect of attentiveness inherent within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners, the focus in this chapter has been two-fold: to illustrate through our collaborative conversations, the quality of attentiveness demonstrated by the primary school teachers in our group; and to describe how our teaching dilemmas became interwoven within our stories of attentiveness. Illustrations of this attentiveness - this pedagogic thoughtfulness or watchfulness - have documented times of excitement as when Helen was able to share her students' growth with another professional, and also detailed periods of frustration and guilt as when Linda was experiencing difficulties dealing with the challenging behaviors of her students. Also interwoven into the fabric of our collaborative conversations about attentiveness were stories of individual teaching dilemmas. In stories such as Allison's in which she struggled to remain consistent with the principles of child development and yet validate the importance of the family in the lives of young children, a teaching dilemma was presented which required her to enter into what Lampert (1985) so aptly describes as an "argument with oneself" (p. 182), with Allison ultimately choosing a course she deemed in the best interests of the child.

In illustrating the quality of our attentiveness, and further, in describing how our teaching dilemmas became interwoven within our stories of attentiveness, we ascribed to a complex and interpersonal view of teaching. This view of teaching required of us a dedication to attentiveness in our professional lives and a concurrent commitment in attending to our personal lives. While personal reflection assisted us in maintaining an appropriate balance between our professional and personal demands, we also found it necessary to draw upon the support we received from family and from other members of our teaching community, both within and outside our individual school contexts. Without question, our teacher research community provided one such forum within which we could explore our understanding of attentiveness within a supportive and nurturing community of care.

CHAPTER VI

CARING FOR DIFFERENCE

As noted previously, in illustrating the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge, we used as a lens Elbaz's (1992) themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference. In this chapter, focus is directed at illustrating the quality of our caring for difference among the children in our classes. In discussing the quality of caring for difference, Elbaz (1992) suggests that the profession of teaching requires of its members an attention to the individual in relation to others within the learning community. Included within this consideration of care is a view of the child as "one among many" (Elbaz, 1992, p. 427), varying from others in the group in terms of individual growth and development. Elbaz (1992) offers the following explanation of this attribute of moral:

> Teaching trains us to pay attention to difference, to see each pupil as one member of a larger group, so that while recognizing all the variability in attitudes, abilities, experience, disposition, and need that is present in the group, we remember that as teachers we must act, and we are bound to act in a way that meets difference with fairness and justice. (p. 427)

We found it of assistance to draw upon Elbaz's (1992) consideration of the one among many to describe that quality inherent within our personal practical knowledge. We also recognized and valued the uniqueness of the individual child within the social context of the many in our classes. However, as a point of departure from Elbaz (1992), we viewed our quality of caring for difference not from within the ethic of justice, with its precepts in fairness and equality (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981, 1984), but instead as embedded within the ethic of care as conceptualized by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984, 1986). In their conceptualization, the ethic of care is situated within the context of social relationships and concrete lived experiences, as opposed to the ethic of justice which exists within a dispassionate and cognitive perspective of individual rights and principles. Integrated as it was in our mind and body, and in our practice, our personal practical knowledge was also embedded within the context of our social relationships and lived experiences as primary school practitioners and as women.

Further, within the ethic of care the teaching-learning relationship is viewed as a "moral type of friendship" (Noddings, 1986, p. 499), wherein both affective and academic growth are promoted through the fidelity of relation. We shared with Noddings this view of teaching-learning relationships. Thus, as a quality of the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge, our caring for difference included Elbaz's consideration of the child as "one among many," but was based upon Noddings (1986) notion of the fidelity of relation among our students (the ones cared-for) and us as early childhood practitioners (the ones-caring).

Similarly to the preceding chapter, in illustrating the quality of our caring for difference I have interwoven stories of individual teaching dilemmas into the fabric of a few of our collaborative conversations. While these teaching dilemmas did not arise when describing a child as "one among many," these dilemmas of care were embedded within stories detailing our fidelity of relation. As Noddings (1986) aptly notes, in considering our fidelity of relation as teachers, we reflect upon our work in terms of its impact on our present relation, the growth of that person as a caring individual, and the development of a community of caring.

One Among Many

The work of caring for differences of the one among many was perceived by us as an important corollary to the development of an appropriate and individualized program. One example of this caring for differences of the one among many within her classroom was provided by Gertrude during our September, 1992 dinner meeting. Gertrude spoke of her strong affection for the individual children in her class, a manner which I saw as similar to that of a mother's affection for her own children. At this September meeting we discussed our individual classroom organizations and teaching assignments for the 1992-93 school term. Three of us were beginning our first year in teaching a combined kindergarten/year one program. After our first three weeks, we reported a high degree of personal satisfaction for teaching this particular age grouping. In all of our programs, kindergarten and year one aged children attended in the morning and were involved in activities including learning centers, story time, fine arts, and physical education, whereas only the year one aged children returned in the afternoon to extend their work in the areas of literacy and mathematics.

Thus, the class size was reduced considerably in the afternoon. Gertrude worked in such a program. During our discussions of the merits of this type of programming, she demonstrated the quality of her caring for the differences she observed among her pupils.

> Gertrude: It's (combined kindergarten/year one programming) wonderful! I've just fallen passionately in love with every one of them because I'm really able to attach to each individual. I already know all their strengths and all their weaknesses, and I'm walking around just melting. One of the children says, "I know, you're going to tell us you love us again." I said, "Am I doing that too much?" "No, we can stand it." But it's so wonderful...
>
> Maureen: You feel spoiled.
>
> Gertrude: It's an amazing thing. And I'm worrying about challenging the little munchkin who is reading at the grade two level - fluently. And my little guy who doesn't seem to have any alphabetic understanding yet. And then today, he learned to write "Mom," and then we taught him how to read the word "car." And there's all kinds of words that he can learn because there's time that we can do that.
>
> (September 24, 1992)

While she had previously spoken about the differences noted with children who were progressing in a typical fashion, in the following story Gertrude discussed the difference observed in one of her students who was making a difficult transition from a segregated Early Education program of five students to her combined kindergarten/year one program with a class size of twenty-five. Gertrude noted that "Ginny," who exhibited severe language and cognitive deficits, was having difficulties in making herself understood and was resorting to the use of temper tantrums as attention seeking behavior.

> Gertrude: But I'm integrating this little child, Ginny, you'll have to change her name. And she's never been in an environment with more than five children. And the idea for her last year was to go to centers, but centers was ten minutes long. "Ginny, you'll go play in the water for ten minutes." Like there was never any choice. There was never - but behavior isn't really a problem with her. There's no aggression. She does throw tantrums, but she's found out they don't work with me. She can't understand why they don't work.
>
> Helen: But it's not an aggression type tantrum, is it? It's an attention tantrum.
>
> (September 24, 1992)

In both stories, Gertrude demonstrated her commitment to caring about the different needs of the individual students; the first one focusing on her interest in identifying differing literacy abilities between two students, and the second one focusing on her attempts to more fully understand the causes underlying Ginny's behavioral outbursts. Undoubtedly, caring for the differences among these individual students assisted Gertrude in providing appropriate programming. With the two children demonstrating different literacy abilities, she was able to structure activities in which both children met with success and challenge, whereas in Ginny's case Gertrude removed herself from the inappropriate behaviors, at the same time teaching Ginny how to make appropriate choices during center time.

At our June, 1992 meeting, I told a story which also addressed the relation between caring for differences of the one among many and the provision of appropriate programming. I described a scene from earlier in the month when a district consultant had briefly visited my classroom during morning literacy period. During the 1991-92 school year, I taught a group of twenty-three year one aged students including "Krista," who received medication for an attention difficulty.

> Maureen: Anyway, here we are in our literacy period and the children were all working in their groups - one group in the hallway pouring over their latest Ramona novel, and another group writing a response to the text we just read, and the third group reading with me - and in walked the consultant. I didn't think anything of the scene - it was typical - my group of eight readers surrounding me, sitting in a circle on the floor, all of us but Krista with our own books. Krista and I share because we find she is more focused on the text when I track for her and she usually is more comfortable standing up, draped over my shoulder with her arms around my neck. She doesn't squirm as much when she is hugging me and she has really grown in her reading ability this year - reading in this kind of odd position. Anyway, afterwards, the consultant asked if Krista was the child who was having all the temper tantrums, and I said "No, of course not! Krista is such a sweety!" But then it occurred to me that maybe it did look a little unorthodox - Krista's preferred reading position. And we both had a good laugh.

(June 11, 1992)

In caring for Krista's specific learning needs, that is, her difficulties in attending, I provided reasonable choices for her to grow and develop as a learner. The unorthodox position we gradually established facilitated reading growth and was therefore built into her guided reading period. Whereas other children did not require the same kind of latitude, Krista needed these and other accommodations. Our guided reading period was one example of how caring for her different learning needs through program accommodations facilitated Krista's growth as a learner and her confidence as a student. As with the stories of accommodation retold by Gertrude, my story of Krista illustrated how the quality of our caring for the difference of the one among many provided direction for us as we worked to match individual needs with appropriate programming.

Acknowledging the Range

As illustrated in the above two stories, the focus on the one among many highlighted for us the manner in which a particular child differed from others in terms of individual growth and development. We were cognizant of this need to care about differences because we acknowledged the range of abilities among the children in our classrooms. A conversation about this took place during our October, 1991 dinner meeting. With the initial round of report cards and conferences scheduled in subsequent weeks, our conversation focused on various aspects of the assessment and reporting process.

After talking about the merits of student portfolios, computerized report cards, and individualized education plans (I.E.P.s), we turned our attention to the issue of reporting progress to parents. In our reporting we wanted to be informative and accurate, yet sensitive to the fact that a report card was only one snapshot of a child's current level of functioning. The following conversation occurred as we talked about the letter grade system. We believed that the letter grade system compared the growth of one child to the standard established by the rest of the class, rather than reporting individual growth against the standard of the graded curriculum. After we discussed the removal of the letter grade system from a number of school report cards, Glenda noted that parents were confused with how schools were reporting progress.

> Glenda: And parents were really confounded. They asked, "How do I know how my child is doing?" And they would get the answer, "It doesn't matter. Your child is an individual." "Well, no he's not," they would answer. "He is a member of society, and I really want to know how he is going to fit in for the rest of his life, and I want this prediction the first report card at the beginning of grade one, you know."

> Allison: Let me ask you something because I'm in the position of not having a child in school yet. So I haven't worn my parent hat yet in this whole business of assessment. Do you not really have an idea - well I look at my daughter and I think to myself, "Oh, she's terribly bright." And then other times I think I don't have the vaguest notion of what she is like. The only one I know is her. But give me a six, seven, eight year old, and I can tell you where they are at - you know - compared to the general field. So once my daughter gets to the kindergarten or grade one

stage, then I'll know where she's at because then I have my frame of reference.

Susan: But, you see, you are a teacher and you do have your frame of reference, but the general public doesn't have that frame of reference.

Allison: Okay.

Glenda: I only had the experience of a kindergarten teacher before I had children, and I knew I had a bright son because he could handle kindergarten reading. He didn't go to kindergarten writing - but that is a different story. But when he got to grade one, I really didn't know how to judge his work because I had never taught grade one, so I kept asking, "How are you doing?" And he would say, "I'm ahead of Ben!" But then I found out "Ben" was at the bottom of the class!

Allison: What do you call that - a pace car? He chose a good one. Now he's not a high stress kind of guy.

Linda: I think that as a teacher without a child, teaching is much different than when you become a teacher with a child, because you then begin to see things a lot differently.

Helen: You know, I think there is something to be said for seeing how they are functioning in a variety of ways. Like as a unique individual, but also how they function in a group and in a society, because that's how life is. And you know you get to the point that you are looking to enter university and you are competing and I don't think we are doing parents justice when we say they don't need comparisons because they do need to have the full picture.

> Allison: I do agree with you, and yet I don't think we can interpret that right back to children who are four, five, or six years old, because six months chronological age makes a tremendous difference in development, but six months at university age makes no difference at all. So I ache for those kids who are in grade one and not reading. You know, I remember as a grade two teacher, I worked with a grade one teacher who had taught grade one for several years, and she predicted at the end of October - she went to the principal and said, "I have eight children who are going to fail grade one because they won't be reading by the end of grade one." And, gosh darn, we got to the end of the year and she was right. So I went to the principal and said, "Give them to me, please." And I would like to take a little bit of credit because they were, with one exception, boys, and it wasn't a terribly interesting business to them - this reading - and they had to be picked up from where they were at, and by the end of grade two, they were all reading at grade level or above. And it's not just for me that it happened. I've seen it happen over and over and over again. So in terms of how do they fit with the group - if we could somehow get rid of the "flock mentality" and just let them learn and grow.

(October 30, 1991)

This conversation gave us an opportunity to examine student assessment from a personal and professional vantage point. In the initial section of the excerpt, Glenda and Allison considered the quality of caring for difference from their perspectives as mothers. Both referred to the need for a frame of reference by which they could assess their own children's growth and development in relation to the range of functioning typical to that age level. This requirement for a frame of reference was picked up by Helen as a practitioner considering the breadth of a child's schooling from kindergarten through university. Helen talked about the importance of parents being conversant with the range of abilities noted among their own children's peers, and the requirement of teachers "doing parents justice" by acknowledging how an individual was performing in relation to others in the class.

In the final section of the conversation, Allison combined her personal and professional knowledge by suggesting that while a comparison of student growth might be reasonable in the work of older students, it was not prudent to make these comparisons too early in a child's education. In Allison's view, acknowledgment of the range among students should motivate a teacher to facilitate growth among all the children in her class. Allison advocated moving away from a "flock mentality," whereby all the children were viewed as progressing in a similar fashion, to a caring stance wherein teachers drew upon their understanding of the difference of the one among many to provide appropriate programming.

It was not only in conversations relating to assessment and reporting student progress that we addressed the need to acknowledge the range of student behavior as a way of caring for difference. During our frequent conversations concerning literacy growth in young children, we also considered the importance of acknowledging the range of reading and writing behaviors as a way of caring for difference. An example of this focus was provided at our October, 1992 dinner meeting. We were discussing the effects of a strong kindergarten literacy program upon programming in reading and writing at the year one level.

Allison: I think that is a very interesting observation that you've made - that the difference in the literacy level of kids coming out of kindergarten programs has a significant impact upon their literacy development in grade one. But the interesting thing to me is that if they've had a less challenging literacy experience in kindergarten, they all seem to be operating at similar levels in the beginning of grade one. But if they've had that really solid experience, you've got that huge range right off the bat in grade one.

Maureen: That might be. For instance, last year the children in my year one class had received outstanding literacy instruction in kindergarten. So rich. And so, within two days of starting the year, I had parents coming in and asking, "Now, you know where my child is in reading, don't you?" And I had to reply, "Well, not quite yet." But afterwards, I was just scrambling for resources because the range was just incredible - the highest seven or eight were reading Ramona books by the end of the year. The middle group was into end of grade one level anthologies, and I would also use a lot of library books of simple folk and fairy tales and other trade books - like, oh, Patrick's Dinosaurs is one that would have been quite challenging for that middle group, but we would have used it at the end of the year because we had eight or nine copies of it. And then my group who were still struggling with text, they still worked out of Big Books with enlarged text and repetitive refrains. I mean the range was absolutely wide. I was in the library all the time, and our teacher librarian was outstanding. Our school had spent a lot of money over a lot of years, and we had loads of story tapes, loads of Big Books. But to me, story tapes are just essential in year one because then you can read that story during guided reading, and then practice reading the story with the tape over and over again. And that's what I counted on because when I was doing this "three ring circus," I had one group on story tapes, one group doing their writing, and one group with me, and then rotating around - except for the highest group because they were so capable of doing independent reading and writing activities. They only had time for story tapes during afternoon center time. They would do that at center time if they chose.

Allison: Now, Gertrude and I - with fifteen each (referring to the fact that only the year one aged children attended the afternoon portion of the combined kindergarten/year one program) - you know we've got the smaller class size, but we've got the big range. We've got kids at one end of the spectrum who are reading chapter books - a solid group of them. And then we've got kids at the other end who are struggling with speech/text connections, and then everything in between.

Glenda: Now, why do you have such a high number of kids in the early part of grade one who are reading chapter books already?

Gertrude: Because they had lots of story reading and lots of Big Books in kindergarten, and lots of reading at home.

Allison: Yeah. And lots and lots of writing. And I sent those kids home from kindergarten with reading material. Their "At Home Reading Program" over the summer was Sounds of Laughter and Sounds After Dark (reading anthologies at the grade two and three level). That's what they went home with, and so it's chapter books starting grade one.

Glenda: Now with all your one's, were you the only kindergarten teacher at your school last year? So, did you have that kind of a range last year in kindergarten?

> Allison: Yes, I was the only kindergarten teacher last year at our school, and, well, they all started off kind of similar, and then, as the year went on, you started to get the big, big, big range starting to build. But it wasn't so apparent even then, but it's really apparent now in grade one.
>
> Maureen: Right - when they're really tackling the printed message.
>
> (October 28, 1992)

Acknowledging the range of literacy behaviors among our students was considered an important precursor to addressing these differences through programming accommodations. As was evidenced in our conversation, acknowledgment of the range of literacy abilities demonstrated by the individual children in our classes represented the first step towards accommodating these differences through a variety of literacy resources and differentiated programming. For our children who were experiencing difficulties in matching speech to text, this type of programming accommodation necessitated extended periods of guided reading of enlarged text with their teachers, and the additional assistance provided through technological supports such as audio taped stories and specific computer software packages. For our children who were demonstrating increasingly sophisticated literacy behaviors, programming accommodations included the use of novel studies and associated response journals. Through the provision of appropriate program accommodations, we worked towards addressing the differences in our children's literacy development in a caring way which would facilitate student success and growth.

Teacher Advocacy and Children With Special Needs

In acknowledging the range of abilities existing among students in our classrooms and by developing programming modifications based upon our caring for these differences, we advocated on behalf of all the children within our care. As in my story of Krista, usually this advocacy role required us to make minor modifications to a child's program. However, in certain circumstances our advocacy role became more extensive, as the difference of the one among many necessitated significant program adaptations. Such was the advocacy role undertaken by Allison in her support of program modifications for one of the children in Gertrude's room. While it could be argued that an extended period of advocacy for one might result in failure to provide the requisite balance in caring for the many, by her actions Allison maintained there were exceptional circumstances which warranted this intensive focus on the special needs of one child within the class.

At our September, 1992 dinner meeting, Gertrude retold the story of Allison's advocacy efforts on behalf of "Ginny." Gertrude had just transferred to her new school that fall and was teaching in a combined kindergarten/year one program down the hall from Allison, who had been at the school for a number of years. Allison and Gertrude had decided to team teach during morning center time. This arrangement provided daily opportunities for them to work with each other's pupils. That Allison was a veteran member of the staff coupled with the fact that she was familiar with the needs of students from Gertrude's class, assisted her in the advocacy efforts she undertook on behalf of Ginny - a child who figured in one of Gertrude's stories included earlier in this chapter.

Ginny was being transitioned from a segregated Early Education program of five or six children which she had attended during her preschool years, to an integrated school setting of twenty-five children in a combined kindergarten/ year one class. Ginny exhibited significant developmental deficits and a propensity for behavioral outbursts in the form of attention seeking temper tantrums. Given her school background and current level of functioning, Gertrude and Allison decided that Ginny required significant modifications in her programming, including daily assistance provided through the services of a program aide. Up until this point in the year, the teaching assistance time had not been formally built into Ginny's program, but was facilitated on an intermittent basis through the efforts of a committed teaching assistant already based at the school.

> Gertrude: I'm sort of tired with fighting battles to try to see if we can get additional money or if we can get aide time, and the constant mini crises that go on. So, I'll just work with my little Ginny, and I'll just keep quiet, and I'll just do the most that I can with her by myself. And then our aide, who has a heart this big (gesturing with her hands), and who provides aide time to the whole school - she is sneaking into my room for half an hour a day to work alone with Ginny, because she knows that Ginny really needs it, and that I couldn't give her that much time because it's in the middle of our big literacy chunk. Well, that made Allison really angry because Ginny needs some one-to-one assistance each day. She is a funded kid, and she has no teaching assistance time built into her program. She's not being pulled out for extra assistance,

> and I don't want her pulled out. I want her with me and with our group. So Allison took on the whole school and had all the schedules changed so that Ginny would get an hour of aide time a day, and two days she'd get an hour and twenty-five minutes of aide time. Well, it meant literally taking on the whole school - playing advocate for Ginny, playing advocate for me. When I just thought, "I'm just too tired to do this advocacy constantly," Allison just did a heck of a job, and she got it all changed. So that's a big help, but that's one of the reasons Allison is home sick and I'm here - with all the other work she has been doing since August - and now Allison did all that advocating, right? Sitting at school until six o'clock at night, for three hours working with our principal figuring out new schedules to accommodate Ginny's programming needs.

(September 24, 1992)

In undertaking this advocacy role to build teaching assistance time into Ginny's program, Allison demonstrated the quality of her caring for difference. She considered Ginny's learning needs to be of such a nature that it was necessary to readjust schedules throughout the school population to facilitate her program modifications. While considered necessary from the standpoint of caring for the one among many, the advocacy efforts undertaken by Allison proved personally taxing. Contained within the text of Gertrude's story were references to the emotional and physical strain experienced by both teachers as they sought to address one pupil's difference within a context of care.

Not only did Allison demonstrate the quality of her caring for difference by advocating on behalf of a student, she also entered into what

Noddings (1986) describes as a fidelity of relation with both a student and a teaching colleague. Within this "moral type of friendship" (Noddings, 1986, p. 499), Allison responded to their needs by facilitating programming modifications of benefit to both Gertrude and Ginny, and also to the larger community of caring within the school. The fidelity of the caring process was further enriched by the reciprocity demonstrated by Gertrude, as the one cared-for, in her acknowledgment of the assistance of Allison, the one-caring.

A Dilemma in Care

Although personally taxing, the advocacy efforts undertaken by Allison were ultimately successful in obtaining program modifications necessary to support Ginny's learning. While the story of Allison's advocacy in care was representative of the majority of our initiatives wherein we experienced a successful resolution to a classroom concern through our focus on caring for difference, we also talked about instances where we experienced a sense of uncertainty as to how well we were honoring this quality within our personal practical knowledge as early childhood practitioners.

An example of this dilemma in care was provided by Glenda, Dorothy, and Gertrude during our September, 1992 conversation concerning the issue of integrating students with significant behavioral difficulties into programs serving the needs of typically developing children. In addition to sharing our own experiences as primary practitioners, Glenda and Dorothy discussed the issue of integrating children with behavioral disorders from their personal perspectives as parents.

Glenda's perspective had been formulated a number of years earlier, at a time when her daughter attended a "cluster" kindergarten program in which a limited number of children with varying physical, cognitive, or behavioral difficulties were integrated with age-appropriate peers. In addition to the classroom teacher who held qualifications in both early childhood and special education, two teaching assistants also worked in the program. Although there was one child in the program exhibiting behavioral difficulties, Glenda remained confident that the learning and safety needs of her daughter were being met in this setting because she viewed the teacher as both excellent and experienced. While Glenda considered the issue of integration from a parent perspective and offered the view that the classroom teacher represented a decisive factor in determining the success of an integrated program, Dorothy spoke of how her daughter had reacted to the presence of an integrated student within her classroom.

> Dorothy: You know, it's really interesting, the whole element of integration. A student I spent a great deal of time with - regarding behavior - last year at our school, and he ended up in my daughter's classroom this year. And just looking at it in that perspective - it's given me a new light on the issue. Very interesting.
>
> Allison: You do have different feelings about it now, do you?
>
> Dorothy: It was quite interesting.

Allison: Well, you have the educational feelings and the parental feelings, and they don't always mesh, do they?

Glenda: You know all the theory and know all the answers that you should be feeling.

Dorothy: And you know, after listening to my daughter when she has been his partner, and I listen to her and she showed a really compassionate side because she identified with special needs right away, you know, how kids do.

Glenda: The one thing that most people forget is, of course, that this child has rights but so does my normal child.

Dorothy: Yes. That was my concern.

Gertrude: And sometimes we're expecting other children to take on a compassionate, understanding, accepting role, and they can't. They're not at the level that they can. I mean, they are trying to understand themselves. And sometimes we ask them to do a lot of tolerating of some of these behaviors, you know, and it is affecting.

(September 24, 1992)

In considering the integration issue both from their perspective as practitioners and as parents, Glenda and Dorothy found themselves attempting to balance their caring for the one among many who was experiencing behavioral difficulties, with their caring as mothers of children who require a sense of security and focus within their classroom setting. Although Dorothy indicated that her own daughter had demonstrated compassion in her relations with the integrated student, some members of our group questioned whether it was possible, or indeed appropriate, for classmates to be asked to assume "compassionate, understanding, and accepting" roles in their interactions with students exhibiting behavioral difficulties.

As reflected in the conversation, the balancing of our caring for the one who was exhibiting behavioral difficulties with our caring for the many other students, including our own children, represented a point of dilemma in which we struggled both collectively and individually to resolve. While the perspectives offered by Glenda and Dorothy related to their dilemma as practitioners and parents in balancing the caring for the one exhibiting behavioral difficulties with the caring for the many other students, most particularly their own children, Gertrude discussed this dilemma of care from the perspective of her own students.

> Gertrude: I had a little girl ("Betty") last year, who is now in a segregated site, who should never have been with me last year, but that's where she was. And she was a screamer. And we worked really hard on the behavior, and the children in the classroom were really very good about it, but I know that it nearly wrecked their year in kindergarten. I had to do triple duty, and the thing that scared me the most and made me really sit up and take notice, was that one little girl came up to me and said, "Mrs. Smith, why do you never pull Betty on to your lap and hold her tight when she's crying and crying, like you do when we cry and cry when something is the matter?" And I said, "Because nothing's the matter with Betty. How do I explain this? That I love all of you when you hurt, and I'll hold you and wait until you're well, or if you're crying because your Grandpa just died, or all those things, I'm always there with lots of love. But Betty's

choosing to scream, and I don't love that so I won't hold her, and I'll put her in a corner and leave her by herself." Well, the kids were like...

Glenda: See. They don't understand.

Gertrude: "How can you really love me?" I mean, then there's the whole thing of the trust starting to slip away. "If you can't see I'm hurt, am I going to get stuck in a corner here so that you can't watch me?" I mean, I could see their terror that the trust was going to go between us, and that I maybe really didn't love them.

Allison: And they see almost two different teachers, two different people, and they don't know which one...

Gertrude: Well, they did. They see the tough guy and they see the other.

Allison: That's right. And that's what I always found really difficult.

Gertrude: Very hard. And then I'd agonize - "Am I too tough?"

(September 24, 1992)

In considering her dilemma of balancing the discipline requirements of the one child with the needs of the others to feel safe and nurtured, Gertrude engaged in a similar "argument with oneself" (Lampert, 1985, p. 182) as did Allison when faced with a parental request to intervene in the handedness of one of her students. This pedagogical dilemma, or "argument," intensified for Gertrude as she sought to understand how the other children in her class perceived her caring for the difference of the one among many.

As indicated by Noddings (1986), Gertrude's dilemma in care concerned how her caring for difference impacted upon her present relationship with the children, and the extent to which it fostered her students' growth as caring individuals. In effect, Gertrude's dilemma in care revolved around the question of how her actions were affecting the development of a community of caring. Although Gertrude found the experience of coping with the dilemma personally agonizing, she was able to report that by January of that school term, Betty was demonstrating increasingly settled behavior and was beginning to socialize with other children in her class. In effect, by restorying her dilemma in care into a story about Betty's progress, Gertrude was eventually able to reframe her understanding within a disposition of hopefulness.

Caring for Difference in Primary School Programs

In illustrating the quality of our caring for difference within the ethic of care, we drew upon Elbaz's (1992) consideration of the child as one among many, and Noddings (1986) notion of the fidelity of relation. Embedded within our collaborative conversations were stories such as mine, wherein I described the quality of my caring for the difference in Krista by accommodating to her specific learner needs. Also recounted by our group were stories of our caring for difference because we acknowledged the range of abilities existing among the children in our classrooms. Often contained within our literacy stories were examples of how our efforts to provide appropriate programming had been based upon our acknowledgment of the range of abilities among the children in our care.

Whereas we drew upon Elbaz's (1992) consideration of the one among many in illustrating our caring for difference, it was in our fidelity of relation wherein we undertook the role of advocate to ensure that the specific needs of the one among many was being addressed. As recounted by Gertrude, the story of Allison's advocacy demonstrated the quality of reciprocity and confirmation between Allison as the one-caring, and Gertrude as the one cared-for. Also in evidence within this story of advocacy was the constancy of their relationship as colleagues and as friends.

In considering our caring for difference from our fidelity of relation, we involved ourselves in individual dilemmas in care. As reflected in Dorothy's story of her daughter's classmate, and Gertrude's storying and restorying of her work with Betty, the balancing of our caring for the one who was exhibiting behavioral difficulties with our caring for the many other students, including our own children, represented a point of dilemma in which we struggled both collectively and individually to resolve. One constancy within these dilemmas in care was our commitment to meeting the other in caring - in effect, to be centered within the ethic of care.

CHAPTER VII

WE ARE THE TEACHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

As Peter G. Beidler so eloquently reminds us in the quotation on the first page of this thesis, our moral dimension as teachers resonates with the qualities of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference. In the most profound sense, our moral dimension honors the humanness of our work through our relationship of care with the children we teach. It is the quality of our presence among the students in our care which serves to center our work as teachers within a moral dimension experiencing, as Beidler does, the exhilaration of "being around people who are beginning to breathe." Through the sharing of a personal reflection, Beidler makes explicit the moral dimension within his personal practical knowledge to a larger community of readers within and outside the teaching profession.

Similarly, through our collaborative storying we illustrated the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge to other members of our teacher research community, and to readers within and outside our profession. The affective and narrative nature of personal practical knowledge demanded that we enter into a "moral type of friendship" (Noddings, 1986, p. 509) with one another as we collaborated on a story illustrating that which was moral within our work as women early childhood practitioners. While the primary focus of our research was to illustrate through collaborative conversation the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge, the present study also included two related aspects of collaborative conversation: my work as a story teller and story liver, as well as scribe; and collaborative conversation as self-directed professional development. To explore these three research focuses, I have chosen to tell my story of our recent dinner meeting.

Dinner Guests and Absent Members

As with other dinner meetings, our meeting on August 15, 1994 was organized as a pot luck at my home. It had been more than a year since we had all sat down around my dining room table, and I had promised to host a dinner meeting prior to the beginning of the new school year. In addition to catching up on each other's news, I wanted to share the latest draft of the thesis. Although I hoped everyone would be able to attend, only four of us were able to come together on that Monday evening. Vacation plans, out of town business, a sick child, and a broken down car all conspired to reduce our ranks considerably. Disappointing as it was to have so few of our members in attendance, I also recalled that we had never found a date which accommodated all our schedules.

As I was readying my home for our dinner meeting, I considered what I would share that evening with the other three members who could attend - Dorothy, Allison, and Helen. First, I wanted to explain why so few of our members were in attendance. Allison and I had not been able to contact Gertrude, and we assumed she was still away on holidays. Although Allison had been able to reach Susan, she was leaving the city for a week's vacation and was therefore unable to join us. Linda, who had been expecting her second child at our last meeting in May of 1993, phoned earlier in the day to indicate she was unable to attend as her baby had been recently immunized and was running a temperature. Cathy phoned to report her car wouldn't start and she would be unable to meet. Glenda had planned to attend, but was detained out of town on business.

Of all our members, Glenda's professional life had changed the most dramatically. While the rest of us were returning to classroom assignments in the fall, Glenda was retraining as an insurance broker. Glenda had spent the winter term taking graduate level courses in early childhood and special education, while pondering her career options within and outside the teaching profession. In the years since returning to the classroom, Glenda had not been able to secure continuous employment as a teacher. Instead, she had accepted temporary assignments and contracts as a supply teacher. Over the course of the winter, Glenda decided to leave the teaching profession for work in the private sector.

In considering how I would share Glenda's news at our meeting, I thought back to my first two years as a young and inexperienced teacher in an inner city school. I taught in a year one program across the hall from Glenda, who was an experienced kindergarten teacher. I remembered her classroom, with its handmade curtains and its wealth of "stuff" - dolls, cradles, blocks, baby tubs, beads, and paint pots. Her classroom was alive with the sights and sounds of children learning. At the end of the day, I also remember leaning against the wall in the hallway watching Glenda end her day by hugging her students, and discussing toilet training and bottle feeding with her parents. As I thought about how I would tell our group of Glenda's career change, I felt saddened by the loss to our profession of such a gifted and caring teacher.

While I guessed news of Glenda's career change would be the most dramatic development, I wondered what the rest of our group had planned for the new school term. From recent phone conversations, I knew that Susan and Cathy would be returning to their schools in primary assignments. The previous week I had assisted Linda in organizing her new kindergarten room, and therefore knew she had transferred schools during her maternity leave. I had also transferred schools and would be teaching in a year one program in the fall.

As anticipated, Glenda's decision to leave teaching was the most surprising to my dinner guests. While Helen, Dorothy, and Allison were saddened by Glenda's decision, they also understood her reasons - given the limited employment opportunities for teachers in our province. After I had spoken about Glenda's decision and had shared the plans of Susan, Cathy, and Linda, Allison talked about her excitement in continuing to teach her class for a second year. She also shared Gertrude's plans to remain at her school with a multi-age grouping, but to move from the primary to upper elementary level. Helen was looking forward to a change from teaching kindergarten in a segregated site, to working with year one aged children in a neighborhood school. In that we held similar teaching assignments this year, Helen and I immediately talked about sharing ideas and resources. Although Dorothy was remaining at her school, her assignment had changed. In addition to her counseling and administrative work, she would be team-teaching in a primary classroom. In that both Dorothy and Allison would be teaching a similar age group, they also talked about sharing ideas and resources.

After sharing our news, I brought out the latest draft of our collaborative story. As in previous meetings, we passed the pages around the table for review and discussion. Embedded within the pages were our collaborative conversations illustrating the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. Also embedded within the pages were insights into my work as a researcher in a collaborative study. As we talked about our collaborative story and my work as a researcher sharing equal vulnerability, I wondered aloud if we had come to a point in our collaborative story where we might also begin to converse about collaborative conversation as a form of self-directed professional development. While these three strands of research were interwoven into the fabric of our dinner conversation, in my present restorying I have chosen to discuss each strand separately.

The Moral Dimension within our Personal Practical Knowledge

In sharing the latest draft of the thesis I explained why I had chosen particular stories as illustrative of our hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference. Although I had secured signed permission slips from everyone in our group granting me permission to use our meeting transcripts as the basis for the present research (see Appendix A), I wanted to ensure that individual members were still comfortable with sharing their stories within the context of a thesis. While Glenda had reconfirmed her permission verbally during a visit earlier in the month, Helen, Dorothy, and Allison provided me with verbal assurances at our meeting. I made a mental note of the need to reconfirm permission with group members who had not been able to attend the meeting.

As pages of the draft were passed around the table, I recalled how we drew upon Elbaz's (1992) work as our lens in our search. We considered our moral dimension as framed within the themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference. I also noted my perception that through our collaborative storying we had engaged in an interrelated process of connecting our knowing with the work of Elbaz, at the same time constructing our own meanings. Subsequently, I explained to Dorothy, Allison, and Helen how I perceived this interrelationship of our connected and constructed meanings.

Within the disposition of hopefulness, our knowing was connected to the work of Elbaz (1992) in that it was not naive nor sentimental, but rather based upon our familiarity with children's development and curricular expectations. In adopting a hopeful stance that the vast majority of children in our care would develop increasingly sophisticated academic competencies, we found ourselves interweaving our personal practical knowing as mothers and early childhood educators. Whether we assumed a passive stance such as in Linda's story of emerging color recognition by her daughter, or an active one such as in Glenda's solution to a student's fine motor difficulty, our hopefulness was founded upon our understanding of children's learning and development, and organized within our knowledge of curriculum.

In illustrating our disposition of hopefulness, we not only connected our knowing with that of Elbaz (1992), we also constructed our own meaning. While Elbaz suggests that institutional structures of schooling, such as large class sizes or narrowly defined achievement standards, may trigger feelings of disillusionment or even despair in teachers we found that our relationships with students either fostered or diminished our sense of hopefulness as primary school practitioners. As illustrated in stories such as Helen's retelling of her leg injury, we held that our disposition of hopefulness was directly connected to the level of relatedness, receptivity, and responsiveness we experienced in our interactions with students and staff. Not only did Helen's story illustrate how our relationships with students and staff impacted upon our disposition of hopefulness, it also illustrated how a sense of humor had the potential to assist teachers in reframing a disillusioning story into one centered within a disposition of hopefulness.

In our attentiveness to the growth and development of individual children within our care, we also connected our knowing to the work of Elbaz (1992). As exemplified in Allison's story of teaching computer skills to a preschool visitor, through this special kind of attentiveness we were led to a greater understanding and appreciation of our students' current levels of development, and were able to use this understanding in planning future growth. Attentiveness to our students also carried over into conversations about our classrooms, as illustrated through such stories as Gertrude's discussion of the issue of desks at a school barbecue, and Allison's restorying of acceptable levels of noise in primary classrooms. In stories which focused on such issues as furniture preferences and noise levels, our attentiveness to the classroom environment was viewed as significant to the fostering of student growth and development.

Through our collaborative conversations, we not only connected our knowing with the work of Elbaz (1992) but also extended our knowing by understanding our teaching dilemmas as dilemmas of attentiveness within the ethic of care. Whereas Elbaz grounded her understanding of dilemmas within the dispassionate and cognitive domain of Lampert's (1985) work on teachers as dilemma managers, we found that our individual dilemmas involved non-cognitive priorities of nurture and relation. In stories such as Helen's and

Dorothy's struggles to balance the demands of home and school, our individual teaching dilemmas were embedded within the affective, and dealt with aspects of nurture and relation within the ethic of care. As in stories such as Linda's struggle with challenging student behavior, an accompaniment to dilemmas of attentiveness were often feelings of frustration or guilt.

The quality of our caring for difference also connected our knowing to the work of Elbaz (1992). Within our connected knowing, we too viewed the child as "one among many" (Elbaz, 1992, p. 427), varying from others in the group in terms of individual growth and development. In stories such as Gertrude's recounting of the differing literacy needs between two of her students, or my description of Krista's unorthodox guided reading position, we were cognizant of our need to care about the difference of the one among many because we acknowledged the range of abilities among the children in our classrooms. As illustrated in stories such as Gertrude's restorying of Allison's advocacy efforts, by acknowledging the range of abilities existing among our students and by offering program modifications based upon our caring for these differences, we also advocated on behalf of all the children within our care.

In our view of the child as one among many, our knowing was connected to Elbaz's (1992) work. However, in our perspective we constructed our meaning not from within the ethic of justice as does Elbaz, but from within the ethic of care. Based within the ethic of care, conversations such as the one dealing with student assessment or appropriate literacy resources illustrated our commitment to a moral type of friendship wherein both the affective and academic growth were promoted. In constructing our knowing from within this moral type of friendship, our collaborative conversations drew upon Noddings (1986) notion of the fidelity of relation between our students (the ones cared-for) and us as early childhood practitioners (the ones-caring). As exemplified in stories such as Gertrude's balancing of the caring for the one exhibiting behavioral difficulties with the caring for the many other students, our commitment to the fidelity of relation sometimes drew us into dilemmas of care.

My Work as a Researcher in a Collaborative Study

In sharing the latest draft of our collaborative story at our August dinner meeting, I tried to give Helen, Dorothy, and Allison a sense of how I had come to understand our knowing as connected with the work of Elbaz (1992) and also as a construction of our own meaning as a group of women early childhood practitioners. In my view, we had drawn upon Elbaz's themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference as points of similarity and also points of departure within our dinner conversations. As with Glenda, the three members in attendance at our meeting shared a similar perspective with respect to comparing our work with that of Elbaz (1992). Moreover, they supported my choice of stories which drew upon Elbaz's themes to illustrate the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge.

In that we had often talked about our personal practical knowledge in relation to Elbaz's (1992) themes of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference, I anticipated this consensus of opinion among group members. I also recognized it would be necessary to talk with the remaining members to guarantee full consensus prior to presenting the final draft of the thesis to my examining committee. However, a comment I hadn't anticipated was made by Allison when she admitted to surprise that I would review this latest draft with our group, and elicit yet another round of conversation concerning the selected stories and their interpretation. Allison noted that in her personal experience, and in that of other colleagues, educational researchers drafted their findings with little, if any, consultation among those involved in the research. While she appreciated the opportunity for another round of conversation related to our dinner meeting stories, Allison also indicated she had not expected it.

Allison's surprise at being involved in the final stages of framing our research caused me to reflect again on my work as a researcher in a collaborative study. I found myself considering the work of Noddings (1986), Connelly and Clandinin (1990), Clandinin (1988), and Hollingsworth (1992, 1994) in reflecting upon the work of a researcher in collaborative research. In her emphasis on developing a sense of community and collegiality within the research relationship, I believed Noddings (1986) advances a fundamental principle about research for teaching. As with Noddings, Connelly and

Clandinin (1990) also concern themselves with the notion of relationship when they maintain that the process of narrative inquiry is entered through "negotiation of a shared narrative unity" (p. 3). Connelly and Clandinin note that over the course of the process, the voices of the teachers and the research voice gradually blend into a shared narrative involving both the construction and reconstruction of meaning. In describing such an approach as a "gentle" (p. 12) process, they describe the role of the researcher as a scribe, but also as a storyteller and story liver.

As with the work of Noddings (1986), and Connelly and Clandinin (1990), I also drew upon the research of Clandinin (1988, 1991) and Hollingsworth (1992, 1994) in reflecting on my work as a researcher in a collaborative study. In their writings, both Clandinin and Hollingsworth describe their work as feminist in approach. While Clandinin (1988, 1991) considers her research into narrative as a mutual construction of a shared story, Hollingsworth (1992, 1994) views her research into collaborative conversation as an example of feminist research in that it honors certain precepts. According to Hollingsworth (1992), inherent within feminist research are precepts which include the following: considering women's experiences as resources in the development of theory; relating research initiatives to the needs of women; and establishing within the role of the researcher, an equal vulnerability to that of the researched. Hollingsworth continues by suggesting that through a willingness to assume such risks, and further, in being open to change as a result of this feminist research approach, both the researcher and the other participants involve themselves in the dual processes of reflection and action.

In reflecting on Allison's surprise, I considered my understanding of research related to Noddings' (1986) notion of relationship, Connelly's and Clandinin's (1990) negotiation of a shared narrative unity, and Clandinin's (1988, 1991) and Hollingsworth's (1992, 1994) view of collaborative storying as feminist in approach. I recalled the first time I had read Noddings (1986) work in which she notes as inherent within research for teaching, the fostering of community and collegiality within the research relationship. At that time, I found myself contrasting the concept of research for teaching with Eisner's (1988) description of the "commando raids" (p. 19) approach in which researchers descend upon a school community to conduct research on teaching. While I viewed the former approach as validating teachers' personal practical knowledge, I considered the latter approach as having the potential to undermine teachers' knowing by relegating it to a ranking inferior to that of the researcher's. Of critical importance to me as a practitioner and researcher was that the present study would honor Noddings' (1986) notion of relationship in research for teaching.

In formulating a preliminary research plan, I drew upon Noddings' (1986) notion of relationship by inviting teaching colleagues to join with me in exploring our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. This sense of relationship was perhaps more quickly established in that the participants were either personal friends of mine, as in the initial group of six, or a personal friend of one of our initial members, as in the case of the three who joined us in the second year of the study. Combined with the fact that we were personal friends as well as teaching colleagues, the decision to meet in my home as dinner guests seemed to ground our research in precepts of collegiality and shared vulnerability.

On several occasions, I recalled commenting that even if our collaborative conversations never reached the stage of being documented within a thesis, our coming together to story and restory our lives as women early childhood practitioners was invaluable to me in my evolving personal practical knowledge. I was particularly cognizant of the need for collegiality during the first months of the study, at a time when I was experiencing limited success in working with a child exhibiting severe behavioral difficulties. My storying about this experience prompted others in our group to share their stories of challenging student behavior, and over time, this storying process led me to a restorying which detailed strategies and resources I began employing to deal positively with the challenging student behaviors.

While I was determined to honor Noddings' (1986) notion of relationship in research for teaching, I was less certain as to how our individual teacher voices would eventually blend into what Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe as the "negotiation of a shared narrative unity" (p. 3). Early in the research, I attempted to direct the blending of our individual teaching stories by providing a summary of topics we had discussed at our previous meeting, and then soliciting suggestions from the group as to possible foci for our current meeting. After analyzing several transcripts, I realized that my efforts at directing the conversation were unwarranted and, quite likely, ill advised. Within minutes of providing my summary and soliciting potential research foci, we found ourselves again immersed in a collaborative conversation which we eventually recognized as illustrating the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. Our collaborative conversations illustrating the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge were, without question, of a more profound nature than any combination of topics I was proposing for discussion.

Grounded in narrative and deeply ingrained in the affective, the ebb and flow of our collaborative conversations blended our individual voices and our temporal understandings into a shared narrative unity. As scribe, I needed to abandon my reliance on advance organizers in favor of allowing the threads of our conversation to become interwoven into what has now coalesced into the present thesis. As I watched Allison, Helen, and Dorothy re-read portions of our collaborative conversations, it occurred to me that more than any other trait, the work of scribe required patience and faith that over time there would emerge a fabric weaving together the threads of collaborative conversations - in effect, the negotiation of a shared fabric of narrative unity.

In reflecting upon my work as a researcher in a collaborative study, I considered Noddings' (1986) notion of relationship, and Connelly's and Clandinin's negotiation of a shared narrative unity, as embedded within a feminist approach to research for teaching. As Dorothy, Helen, Allison, and I all sat around my table during that humid August evening, I tried to relate our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners to the precepts inherent in feminist research as discussed by Hollingsworth (1992).

Without question, in stories such as Linda's recounting of her daughter Paula's emerging color recognition, and Allison's "rule of thumb" in primary literacy programs, in our theory development we drew upon our personal practical knowing as mothers and early childhood practitioners. The related precept of linking research initiatives to the needs of women was also addressed by our group in our ongoing conversation about balancing our personal lives as wives and mothers with our professional lives as early childhood educators. Helen's recounting of her early years as a primary school teacher living within a few blocks of school, provided but one illustration of our focus on addressing the specific needs of women within our study.

On an individual basis, my work as a researcher certainly was situated within the context of a shared vulnerability with the other members of our research group. This shared vulnerability was particularly evidenced in my story of carrying a screaming child past staff, students, and school guests. While our collaborative conversations contained several illustrations of shared vulnerability, the individual storytellers determined if there would be an initial audio taped recording of their stories, and the final decision as to the inclusion of the transcribed stories within the present thesis. As I reflected on this notion of shared vulnerability, I recalled how I also made the decision to exclude a few of my transcribed stories in the present thesis. Again as I listened to Helen, Dorothy, and Allison talk about our draft thesis during our August dinner meeting, I could not help but ponder how other researchers might have restoried their studies had they also considered the feminist precept of shared vulnerability with those who participated in their studies.

Collaborative Conversation as Self-Directed Professional Development

Again drawing back to the precepts inherent within a feminist research approach, I reflected on the notion of shared vulnerability in terms of assuming risk and being open to change. Hollingsworth (1992) speaks of this willingness by both researcher and other participants to assume risks and be open to change, as involving dual processes of reflection and action. When I considered these processes of reflection and action, I thought back to my earlier reading of Lieberman (1992), and Clark and Lampert (1986). In Lieberman's work, I recalled her discussion of teaching practitioners viewing themselves as both "describers" and "improvers" (p. 8). In our construction of meaning, the members of our research community had also viewed ourselves as both describers and improvers in that we sought to illustrate the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge, at the same time deepening our commitment to developing as professional educators. In viewing ourselves as describers and improvers, I believed that the members of our research community had involved ourselves in what Clark and Lampert (1986) term self-directed professional development.

While I had always envisioned that through our collaborative conversations illustrating the moral dimension within our personal practical knowledge, we were engaged in a form of self-directed professional development, prior to our recent dinner meeting I had never asked the other members of our group directly if they considered collaborative conversation as self-directed professional development. Therefore, I took the opportunity afforded me at our August 1994 meeting to pose this question to Dorothy, Allison, and Helen. While I was reassured by their comments, I was not surprised. As with me, they had viewed our meetings as a personally relevant way of growing and evolving as educators. I excerpted the following from a wide-ranging and fast paced exchange of ideas as Helen, Dorothy, and Allison conversed about the value of collaborative conversation in their professional development.

> Helen: I wish professional development evolved more like this.
>
> Dorothy: It makes you realize you're not on your own. It's reassuring.

Allison: Like when I shared about "Kent" (a student whose behaviors were disrupting Allison's class). It's not until we shared that I knew I was not alone.

Helen: Yes, we (the teaching profession) have a strict code about handling it ourselves.

Allison: And that's very unwise. We don't value enough our debriefing time. I know after I had to physically restrain Kent, I needed to debrief. But I was back in class and I felt so alone.

Helen: But if we don't build in this time to collaborate into our day, it won't happen. And we need that support.

Dorothy: It (collaborative conversation) was an enjoyable experience in that it provided around-the-table companionship, and the sharing of good food, and the sharing of stories we all could relate to. We could laugh and we could cry.

Helen: And the laughing could help us cope with the difficulties.

Allison: I found it interesting as people talked. We are at different ages and stages. I saw myself at different stages - Linda's and Glenda's - personally and professionally. And it helped me understand myself a little better.

Helen: I think for me, it reinforced - you can have all kinds of books or strategies or resources - but in a lot of our stories, the gut reaction told it all. You have the innate feeling of knowing what to do.

And then you analyze it afterwards. All of this helped you make the reaction. You didn't refer to a textbook.

Allison: I also belong to another group of educators who have met regularly for years - and just like this one, it is neat to see how it evolves. We begin with the light dialogue and then we get to the really serious issues.

Helen: The serious issues - the reason you really want to get together.

Allison: Yes, and it is interesting to reflect back on the conversations. Some months, you feel so strong and the other months, so vulnerable. I found it interesting. Also, how people "cushioned" others.

Helen: Like last year with Linda, when we all wanted to help her deal with some of the difficult behaviors she experienced in her classroom.

Allison: Yes. This last year, I felt more vulnerable and my stories would have looked different. It (last year's assignment) felt different - professionally.

Dorothy: I think you come with what you need, and you take from the stories what you need. I just read a book by Jack Canfield called Chicken Soup for the Soul. In it he talks about a university study following up on the lives of a group of inner city boys who everyone agreed wouldn't amount to anything in life. And someone decided to follow up. Well, some were dead or in jail, but the majority were successful lawyers and doctors. They were asked, "What was your inspiration?

How did you succeed?" And they (the former students) all identified one teacher. So the researcher tracked down the teacher and asked her secret. She replied, "I just loved them!"

Helen: Like when we were making valentines and one of my children was cutting out favorite things to paste on the valentines. And when he (the student) was making one for me, his mother asked, "What does Mrs. M. like?" And he replied, "She just likes kids." And I'll remember that to my dying day. She just likes kids. It ties into all of this. It all comes down to basics - you have to like kids.

Allison: And be flexible.

Helen: Look at the individual.

Allison: And you have to be inspired.

Dorothy: And take from them (the students) also. We are also learners.

Allison: You know, a friend of mine had another teacher observing in her classroom. And the visiting teacher sat down with pen and paper, and said, "And how do you do that? And when do you do that?" And she missed the point. She wanted the formula - but there isn't a formula. It's all about heart. It's all about "Mary's" heart in the classroom.

Helen: You know, I just read a quote from someone in an Ann Landers column about coming to the frightening conclusion that our presence as teachers is the most important factor in the classroom. I'll

> phone you (directing her comment to me) with the quote.
>
> (August 15, 1994)

Helen did call me a few days later and dictated over the phone, the quote she had been referring to during our dinner meeting. The author of the quote is Haim Ginott.

> I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. My personal approach creates the climate. My daily mood makes the weather. As the teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crises will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized.
>
> (Landers, 1994, p. C.7)

As can be seen from the conversation, Allison, Dorothy, and Helen considered our collaborative conversations as a valuable form of self-directed professional development. Among the attributes of this form of personally relevant professional growth, they noted the value of collaborative conversation as a method of "debriefing," or restorying, a difficult teaching episode. One example of this restorying was provided by Allison as she spoke of how her feelings of isolation in returning to the classroom immediately after having physically restrained a student, were reframed more positively after sharing her story at a dinner meeting. Both Dorothy and Helen attested to the value inherent within the restorying process when they spoke about the sharing of strong emotions within collaborative conversations as a way of dealing with stressful teaching episodes. Helen also noted that becoming involved in collaborative conversation required a commitment to "build in" the necessary time to meet together as colleagues and as friends.

In recording the words of Allison, Helen, and Dorothy as they spoke about the role of collaborative conversation in self-directed professional development, I also reflected on the way they were framing their stories within the ethic of care. Dorothy retold a story of one teacher's life-long impact upon the students in her care, and Helen built upon Dorothy's story by talking about the way one of her students understood her as someone who "just likes kids." Allison also spoke about fidelity within the ethic of care when she talked about a colleague's "heart," or presence, in the classroom. As in all the previous meetings, this requirement to meet the other in caring again centered our collaborative conversation within the ethic of care.

The Ethic of Care Within our Classrooms and Beyond

As I listened to Helen, Dorothy, and Allison talk about the fidelity of relation within the ethic of care, I finally put my pen and paper down. Through audio tapes and rough notes, I had struggled to record the words of my friends as we storied and restoried about the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. On this warm August night, it seemed appropriate to conclude the thesis with stories which again centered our work within the ethic of care.

Instead of continuing to hastily scribble down their words, I asked if I could share the story of a woman who honors the work of individuals in their care of children, and who also challenges us to draw together collectively to care for children throughout our country and our world. In their conversation Helen, Dorothy, and Allison spoke of the "basics" in education. As policy makers and various stakeholder groups define what they consider as "basic" to education in our province (e.g., Alberta Education, 1993; Government of Alberta, 1994; Department of Elementary Education, 1994), I found the words of Marian Wright Edelman a powerful reminder of our need to be centered within the ethic of care in our classrooms and beyond.

Throughout the course of graduate studies, my sister Janice has been a constant source of encouragement and support. Not only has she devoted countless hours of her time to conversing with me about the research and writing, she has also provided me with numerous texts typically drawn from the field of sociology, and often written from a feminist perspective. One of the latest books Janice purchased for me was written by Edelman (1992), and discusses the responsibility we have in caring for the children in our world. To my mind the stories of Dorothy, Helen, and Allison spoke eloquently about what our presence means to the children in our care. I wondered aloud if Edelman's story would address this presence both within our classrooms and beyond. After sharing my story of Edelman during our dinner conversation, I chose to write my story down as a close to the present study. I have entitled my story, "An Invitation."

An invitation. In an open letter to her adult sons, American civil rights lawyer and social activist Marian Wright Edelman (1992) underscores the importance of centering our personal and professional lives within a frame of caring for children. As a founder in 1964 of the Children's Defense Fund in the United States, Edelman has devoted her life to child advocacy service, working towards the realization of a comprehensive national policy which would address the social and economic needs of all children and families living in the United States. Edelman's commitment to the care of children through individual service and collective efforts represents an ideal we teaching practitioners might also strive towards in our work with young children and their families.

In the moral dimension of our individual service as early childhood teachers, the essential qualities of hopefulness, attentiveness, and caring for difference serve to frame our work within the ethic of care. While the moral dimension of our work within classrooms and schools represents the essence of our role as early childhood practitioners, as professional educators we might also consider broadening our focus to include participation in collective efforts, as a way of ensuring that the educational needs of all children and their families are being addressed within our provincial and federal borders, and beyond.

Edelman (1992) concludes her essay detailing our responsibilities in providing care to children through individual service and collective efforts, by citing a prayer written by Ina J. Hughs. While Edelman suggests that readers add to the words "We pray," the resolution "I take responsibility for," I would invite early childhood practitioners to include the words "As teachers of young children, we care."

> We pray for children
> who sneak popsicles before supper,
> who erase holes in math workbooks,
> who can never find their shoes.
>
> And we pray for those
> who stare at photographers from behind
> barbed wire,
> who can't bound down the street in a new
> pair of sneakers,
> who never "counted potatoes,"
> who are born in places we wouldn't be
> caught dead,
> who never go to the circus,
> who live in an X-rated world.
>
> We pray for children
> who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of
> dandelions,
> who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch
> money.

And we pray for those
    who never get dessert,
    who have no safe blanket to drag behind
        them,
    who watch their parents watch them die,
    who can't find any bread to steal,
    who don't have any rooms to clean up,
    whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
    whose monsters are real.

We pray for children
    who spend all their allowance before
        Tuesday,
    who throw tantrums in the grocery store and
        pick at their food,
    who like ghost stories,
    who shove dirty clothes under the bed, and
        never rinse out the tub,
    who get visits from the tooth fairy,
    who don't like to be kissed in front of the car
        pool,
    who squirm in church or temple and scream
        in the phone,
    whose tears we sometimes laugh at and
        whose smiles can make us cry.

And we pray for those
    whose nightmares come in the daytime,
    who will eat anything,
    who have never seen a dentist,
    who aren't spoiled by anybody,
    who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to
        sleep,
    who live and move, but have no being.

We pray for children
    who want to be carried and
    for those who must,

> for those we never give up on and
> for those who don't get a second chance.
>
> For those we smother ... and
> for those who will grab the hand of anybody
> kind enough to offer it.
>
> (Edelman, 1992, pp. 96-97)

Herein lies the moral context for our work within our classrooms and beyond, because we are the teachers of young children.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT PERMISSION LETTER

TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS: A REQUEST FOR PERMISSION

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at the University of Alberta, I am undertaking a research study which explores the moral dimension integrated within our personal practical knowledge as women early childhood practitioners. As you are aware, the study draws upon our collaborative conversations as a research approach through which we story and restory our lives as teachers of young children.

This letter is a request for your written permission to use our recorded conversations, transcribed audio tapes, and letters from our dinner meetings as the foundation for my research.

I ________________________________ grant Maureen Stratton Lemieux written permission for the above request.

Signature of person granting written permission:

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Date: ____________

Signature of person requesting written permission:

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Date: ____________